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STORIES OF  
THE GREAT WEST







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Theodore Roosevelt

1638

# STORIES OF THE GREAT WEST

BY  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT, pres.

Illustrated



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*Published June, 1909*

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

As a youth Theodore Roosevelt was an enthusiastic student of Western history and pioneer types. Later, as ranchman and hunter, he grew to know intimately and to love deeply the rough, free life of the Western plains. Mr. Roosevelt's interest in history probably was inherited, but his fondness for outdoor life grew out of his grateful love for his foster mother—the green earth—who took the delicate youth in her rough, but kindly, embrace and gave him a sound body and a clear vision.

It was during the quiet evenings, and the otherwise idle hours, spent at “Elkhorn,” his Dakota ranch, that Theodore Roosevelt penned most of the fascinating pictures of frontier and ranch life that make up this present volume.

“The Backwoodsmen of the Alleghanies” and “Lewis and Clark and the Exploration of the Far West” are from “The Winning of the West,” permission to republish here having kindly been granted by G. P. Putnam's Sons. The other stories are from “Hero Tales” and “Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail.” Some of these stories have been condensed from the original version for reasons of space.

## THE FORELOPER

The gull shall whistle in his wake, the blind wave break in fire,  
He shall fulfil God's utmost will, unknowing his desire;  
And he shall see old planets pass and alien stars arise,  
And give the gale his reckless sail in shadow of new skies,  
Strong lust of gear shall drive him out and hunger arm his hand  
To wring his food from a desert nude, his foothold from the sand.  
His neighbors' smoke shall vex his eyes, their voices break his rest;  
He shall go forth till South is North, sullen and dispossessed;  
He shall desire loneliness, and his desire shall bring  
Hard on his heels a thousand wheels, a people and a king.  
He shall come back on his own track and by his scarce cool camp,  
There shall he meet the roaring street, the derrick, and the stamp;  
For he must blaze a nation's ways, with hatchet and with brand,  
Till on his last-won wilderness an empire's bulwarks stand.

*Kipling.*

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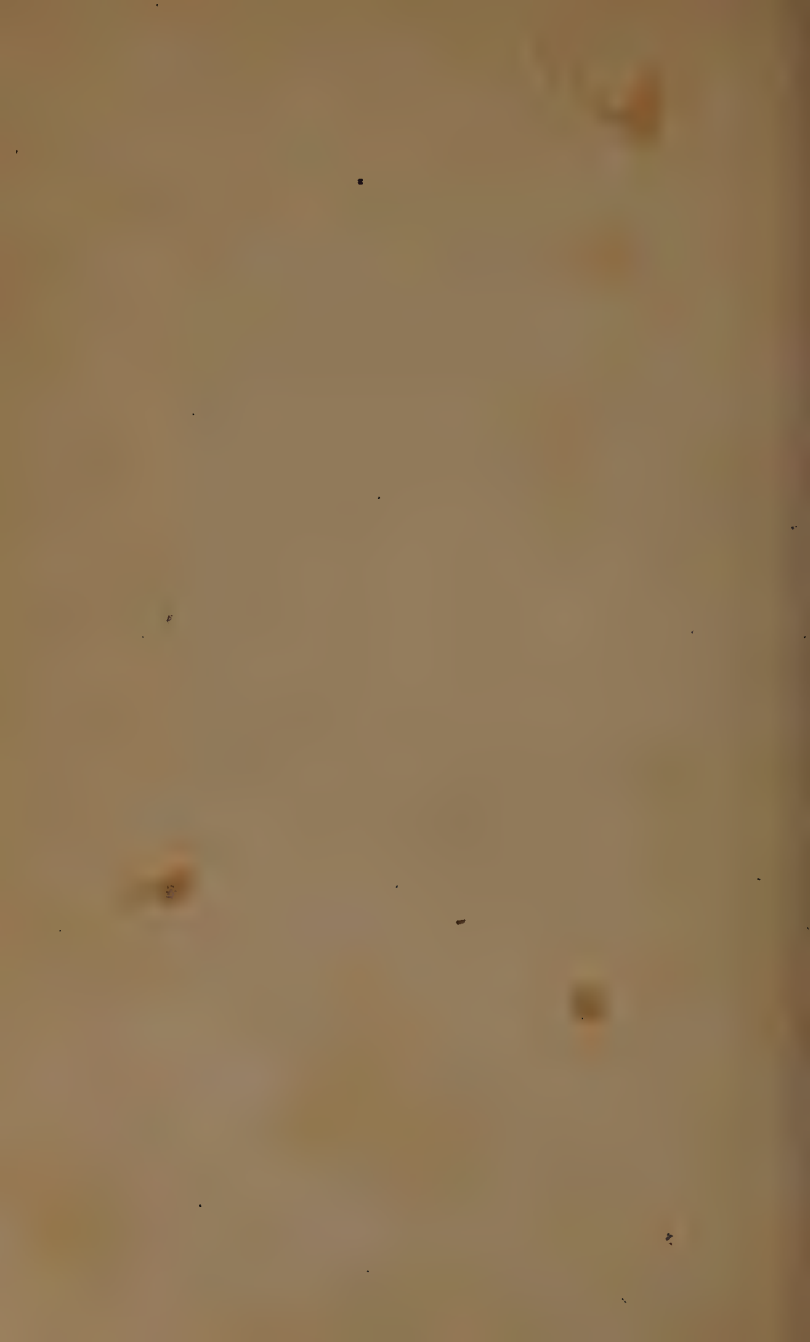
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**DANIEL BOONE AND  
THE FOUNDING OF KENTUCKY**



# PART I

## STORIES FROM HISTORY

### DANIEL BOONE AND THE FOUNDING OF KENTUCKY

**D**ANIEL BOONE will always occupy a unique place in our history as the arch-type of the hunter and wilderness wanderer. He was a true pioneer, and stood at the head of that class of Indian-fighters, game-hunters, forest-fellers, and backwoods farmers who, generation after generation, pushed westward the border of civilization from the Alleghanies to the Pacific. As he himself said, he was "an instrument ordained of God to settle the wilderness." Born in Pennsylvania, he drifted south into western North Carolina, and settled on what was then the extreme frontier. There he married, built a log cabin, and hunted, chopped trees, and tilled the ground like any other frontiersman. The Alleghany Mountains still marked a boundary beyond which the settlers dared not go; for west of them lay immense reaches of frowning forests, uninhabited save by bands of warlike Indians. Occasionally some venture-

some hunter or trapper penetrated this immense wilderness, and returned with strange stories of what he had seen and done.

In 1769 Boone, excited by these vague and wondrous tales, determined himself to cross the mountains and find out what manner of land it was that lay beyond. With a few chosen companions he set out, making his own trail through the gloomy forest. After weeks of wandering, he at last emerged into the beautiful and fertile country of Kentucky, for which, in after years, the red men and the white strove with such obstinate fury that it grew to be called "the dark and bloody ground." But when Boone first saw it, it was a fair and smiling land of groves and glades and running waters, where the open forest grew tall and beautiful, and where innumerable herds of game grazed, roaming ceaselessly to and fro along the trails they had trodden during countless generations. Kentucky was not owned by any Indian tribe, and was visited only by wandering war-parties and hunting-parties who came from among the savage nations living north of the Ohio or south of the Tennessee.

A roving war-party stumbled upon one of Boone's companions and killed him, and the others then left Boone and journeyed home; but his brother came out to join him, and the two spent

the winter together. Self-reliant, fearless, and possessed of great bodily strength and hardihood, they cared little for the loneliness. The teeming myriads of game furnished abundant food; the herds of shaggy-maned bison and noble-antlered elk, the bands of deer and the numerous black bear, were all ready for the rifle, and they were tame and easily slain. The wolf and the cougar, too, sometimes fell victims to the prowess of the two hunters.

At times they slept in hollow trees, or in some bush lean-to of their own making; at other times, when they feared Indians, they changed their resting-place every night, and after making a fire would go off a mile or two in the woods to sleep. Surrounded by brute and human foes, they owed their lives to their sleepless vigilance, their keen senses, their eagle eyes, and their resolute hearts.

When the spring came, and the woods were white with the dogwood blossoms, and crimsoned with the red-bud, Boone's brother left him, and Daniel remained for three months alone in the wilderness. The brother soon came back again with a party of hunters; and other parties likewise came in, to wander for months and years through the wilderness; and they wrought huge havoc among the vast herds of game.

In 1771 Boone returned to his home. Two years later he started to lead a party of settlers to the new country; but while passing through the frowning defiles of Cumberland Gap, they were attacked by Indians, and driven back—two of Boone's own sons being slain. In 1775, however, he made another attempt; and this attempt was successful. The Indians attacked the newcomers; but by this time the parties of would-be settlers were sufficiently numerous to hold their own. They beat back the Indians, and built rough little hamlets, surrounded by log stockades, at Boonesborough and Harrodsburg; and the permanent settlement of Kentucky had begun.

The next few years were passed by Boone amid unending Indian conflicts. He was a leader among the settlers, both in peace and in war. At one time he represented them in the House of Burgesses of Virginia; at another time he was a member of the first little Kentucky parliament itself; and he became a colonel of the frontier militia. He tilled the land and he chopped the trees himself; he helped to build the cabins and stockades with his own hands, wielding the long-handled, light-headed frontier ax as skilfully as other frontiersmen. His main business was that of surveyor, for his knowledge of the country, and his ability to travel through

it, in spite of the danger from Indians, created much demand for his services among people who wished to lay off tracts of wild land for their own future use. But whatever he did, and wherever he went, he had to be sleeplessly on the lookout for his Indian foes. When he and his fellows tilled the stump-dotted fields of corn, one or more of the party were always on guard, with weapon at the ready, for fear of lurking savages. When he went to the House of Burgesses he carried his long rifle, and traversed roads not a mile of which was free from the danger of Indian attack. The settlements in the early years depended exclusively upon game for their meat, and Boone was the mightiest of all the hunters, so that upon him devolved the task of keeping his people supplied. He killed many buffaloes, and pickled the buffalo beef for use in winter. He killed great numbers of black bear, and made bacon of them, precisely as if they had been hogs. The common game were deer and elk. At that time none of the hunters of Kentucky would waste a shot on anything so small as a prairie-chicken or wild duck; but they sometimes killed geese and swans when they came south in winter and lit on the rivers. But whenever Boone went into the woods after game, he had perpetually to keep watch lest he himself might be hunted in turn. He



never lay in wait at a game-lick, save with ears strained to hear the approach of some crawling red foe. He never crept up to a turkey he heard calling, without exercising the utmost care to see that it was not an Indian; for one of the favorite devices of the Indians was to imitate the turkey call, and thus allure within range some inexperienced hunter.

Besides this warfare, which went on in the midst of his usual vocations, Boone frequently took the field on set expeditions against the savages. Once when he and a party of other men were making salt at a lick, they were surprised and carried off by the Indians. The old hunter was a prisoner with them for some months, but finally made his escape and came home through the trackless woods as straight as the wild pigeon flies. He was ever on the watch to ward off the Indian inroads, and to follow the war-parties, and try to rescue the prisoners. Once his own daughter, and two other girls who were with her, were carried off by a band of Indians. Boone raised some friends and followed the trail steadily for two days and a night; then they came to where the Indians had killed a buffalo calf and were camped around it. Firing from a little distance, the whites shot two of the Indians, and, rushing in, rescued the girls. On another

occasion, when Boone had gone to visit a salt-lick with his brother, the Indians ambushed them and shot the latter. Boone himself escaped, but the Indians followed him for three miles by the aid of a tracking dog, until Boone turned, shot the dog, and then eluded his pursuers. In company with Simon Kenton and many other noted hunters and wilderness warriors, he once and again took part in expeditions into the Indian country, where they killed the braves and drove off the horses. Twice bands of Indians, accompanied by French, Tory, and British partizans from Detroit, bearing the flag of Great Britain, attacked Boonesborough. In each case Boone and his fellow-settlers beat them off with loss. At the fatal battle of the Blue Licks, in which two hundred of the best riflemen of Kentucky were beaten with terrible slaughter by a great force of Indians from the lakes, Boone commanded the left wing. Leading his men, rifle in hand, he pushed back and overthrew the force against him; but meanwhile the Indians destroyed the right wing and center, and got round in his rear, so that there was nothing left for Boone's men except to flee with all possible speed.

As Kentucky became settled, Boone grew restless and ill at ease. He loved the wilderness; he loved the great forests and the great prairie-

like glades, and the life in the little lonely cabin, where from the door he could see the deer come out into the clearing at nightfall. The neighborhood of his own kind made him feel cramped and ill at ease. So he moved ever westward with the frontier; and as Kentucky filled up he crossed the Mississippi and settled on the borders of the prairie country of Missouri, where the Spaniards, who ruled the territory, made him an alcalde, or judge. He lived to a great age, and died out on the border, a backwoods hunter to the last.

**BACKWOODSMEN OF THE  
ALLEGHANIES**



# THE BACKWOODSMEN OF THE ALLEGHANIES 1769-1774

## I. WHO THEY WERE AND WHERE THEY SETTLED

**A** LONG the western frontier of the colonies that were so soon to be the United States, among the foothills of the Alleghanies, on the slopes of the wooded mountains, and in the long trough-like valleys that lay between the ranges dwelt a peculiar and characteristically American people.

These frontier folk, the people of the up-country, or back-country, who lived near and among the forest-clad mountains, far away from the long-settled districts of flat coast plain and sluggish tidal river, were known to themselves and to others as backwoodsmen. They all bore a strong likeness to one another in their habits of thought and ways of living, and differed markedly from the people of the older and more civilized communities to the eastward. The western border of our country was then formed by the great barrier-chains of the Alleghanies,

which ran north and south from Pennsylvania through Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, the trend of the valleys being parallel to the sea-coast, and the mountains rising highest to the southward. It was difficult to cross the ranges from east to west, but it was both easy and natural to follow the valleys between. From Fort Pitt to the high hill-homes of the Cherokees this great tract of wooded and mountainous country possessed nearly the same features and characteristics, differing utterly in physical aspect from the alluvial plains bordering the ocean.

The backwoodsmen were Americans by birth and parentage, and of mixed race; but the dominant strain in their blood was that of the Presbyterian Irish—the Scotch-Irish as they were often called. These Irish representatives of the Covenanters were in the west almost what the Puritans were in the northeast, and more than the Cavaliers were in the south. Mingled with the descendants of many other races, they nevertheless formed the kernel of the distinctively and intensely American stock who were the pioneers of our people in their march westward, the vanguard of the army of fighting settlers, who with ax and rifle won their way from the Alleghanies to the Rio Grande and the Pacific. —

The Presbyterian Irish were themselves al-



ready a mixed people. Though mainly descended from Scotch ancestors, many of them were of English, a few of French Huguenot, and quite a number of true old Milesian Irish extraction. They were a truculent and obstinate people, and gloried in the warlike renown of their forefathers, the men who had followed Cromwell, and who had shared in the defence of Derry and in the victories of the Boyne and Aughrim.

They did not begin to come to America in any numbers till after the opening of the eighteenth century; by 1730 they were fairly swarming across the ocean, for the most part in two streams, the larger going to the port of Philadelphia, the smaller to the port of Charleston. Pushing through the long settled lowlands of the seacoast, they at once made their abode at the foot of the mountains, and became the outposts of civilization. From Pennsylvania, whither the great majority had come, they drifted south along the foothills and down the long valleys, till they met their brethren from Charleston who had pushed up into the Carolina back-country. In this land of hills, covered by unbroken forest, they took root and flourished, stretching in a broad belt from north to south, a shield of sinewy men thrust in between the people of the seaboard

and the red warriors of the wilderness. All through this region they were alike; they had as little kinship with the Cavalier as with the Quaker; the west was won by those who have been rightly called the Roundheads of the south, the same men who, before any others, declared for American independence.

That these Irish Presbyterians were a bold and hardy race is proved by their at once pushing past the settled regions, and plunging into the wilderness as the leaders of the white advance. They were the first and last set of immigrants to do this; all others have merely followed in the wake of their predecessors.

These Presbyterian Irish were, however, far from being the only settlers on the border, although more than any others they impressed the stamp of their peculiar character on the pioneer civilization of the west and southwest. Great numbers of immigrants of English descent came among them from the settled districts on the east; and though these later arrivals soon became indistinguishable from the people among whom they settled, yet they certainly sometimes added a tone of their own to backwoods society, giving it here and there a slight dash of what we are accustomed to consider the distinctively southern or cavalier spirit. There was likewise

a large German admixture, not only from the Germans of Pennsylvania, but also from those of the Carolinas. A good many Huguenots likewise came, giving to the backwoods society such families as the Seviers and Lenoirs. The Huguenots, like the Germans, frequently had their names Anglicized. The best known and most often quoted example is that of the Blancpied family, part of whom have become White-foots, while the others, living on the coast, have suffered a marvellous sea-change, the name re-appearing as "Blumpy." There were a few Hollanders and even Swedes, from the banks of the Delaware, or perhaps from farther off still.

A single generation, passed under the hard conditions of life in the wilderness, was enough to weld together into one people the representatives of these numerous and widely different races; and the children of the next generation became indistinguishable from one another. Long before the first Continental Congress assembled, the backwoodsmen, whatever their blood, had become Americans, one in speech, thought, and character, clutching firmly the land in which their fathers and grandfathers had lived before them. They had lost all remembrance of Europe and all sympathy with things European; they had become as emphatically products native

to the soil as were the tough and supple hickories out of which they fashioned the handles of their long, light axes. Their grim, harsh, narrow lives were yet strangely fascinating and full of adventurous toil and danger; none but natures as strong, as freedom-loving, and as full of bold defiance as theirs could have endured existence on the terms which these men found pleasurable. Their iron surroundings made a mould which turned out all alike in the same shape. They resembled one another, and they differed from the rest of the world—even the world of America, and infinitely more the world of Europe—in dress, in customs, and in mode of life.

Where their lands abutted on the more settled districts to the eastward, the population was of course thickest, and their peculiarities least. Here and there at such points they built small backwoods burghs or towns, rude, straggling, unkempt villages, with a store or two, a tavern, a small log school-house, and a little church, presided over by a hard-featured Presbyterian preacher, gloomy, earnest, and zealous, probably bigoted and narrow-minded, but nevertheless a great power for good in the community.

However, the backwoodsmen as a class neither built towns nor loved to dwell therein. They were to be seen at their best in the vast, intermin-

able forests that formed their chosen home. They won and kept their lands by force, and never lived either at war or in dread of war. Hence they settled always in groups of several families each, all banded together for mutual protection. Their red foes were strong and terrible, cunning in council, dreadful in battle, merciless beyond belief in victory. The men of the border did not overcome and dispossess cowards and weaklings; they marched forth to spoil the stout-hearted and to take for a prey the possessions of the men of might. Every acre, every good of ground which they claimed had to be cleared by the ax and held with the rifle. Not only was the chopping down of the forests the first preliminary to cultivation, but it was also the surest means of subduing the Indians, to whom the unending stretches of choked woodlands were an impenetrable cover behind which to move unseen, a shield in making assaults, and a strong tower of defence in repelling counterattacks. In the conquest of the west the backwoods ax, shapely, well-poised, with long haft and light head, was a servant hardly standing second even to the rifle; the two were the national weapons of the American backwoodsman, and in their use he has never been excelled.

## II. THEIR HABITATIONS.

When a group of families moved out into the wilderness they built themselves a station or stockade fort; a square palisade of upright logs, loop-holed, with strong blockhouses as bastions at the corners. One side at least was generally formed by the backs of the cabins themselves, all standing in a row; and there was a great door or gate, that could be strongly barred in case of need. Often no iron whatever was employed in any of the buildings. The square inside contained the provision sheds and frequently a strong central blockhouse as well. These forts, of course, could not stand against cannon, and they were always in danger when attacked with fire; but save for this risk of burning they were very effectual defences against men without artillery, and were rarely taken, whether by whites or Indians, except by surprise. Few other buildings have played so important a part in our history as the rough stockade fort of the backwoods.

The families only lived in the fort when there was war with the Indians, and even then not in the winter. At other times they all separated out to their own farms, universally called clear-





“Their red foes were strong and terrible.”





ings, as they were always made by first cutting off the timber. The stumps were left to dot the fields of grain and Indian corn. The corn in especial was the stand-by and invariable resource of the western settler; it was the crop on which he relied to feed his family, and when hunting or on a war trail the parched grains were carried in his leather wallet to serve often as his only food. But he planted orchards and raised melons, potatoes, and many other fruits and vegetables as well; and he had usually a horse or two, cows, and perhaps hogs and sheep, if the wolves and bears did not interfere. If he was poor his cabin was made of unhewn logs, and held but a single room; if well-to-do, the logs were neatly hewed, and besides the large living and eating-room with its huge stone fireplace, there was also a small bedroom and a kitchen, while a ladder led to the loft above, in which the boys slept. The floor was made of puncheons, great slabs of wood hewed carefully out, and the roof of clapboards. Pegs of wood were thrust into the sides of the house, to serve instead of a wardrobe; and buck antlers, thrust into joists, held the ever-ready rifles. The table was a great clapboard set on four wooden legs; there were three-legged stools, and in the better sort of houses old-fash-

ioned rocking-chairs. The couch or bed was warmly covered with blankets, bear-skins, and deer-hides.

These clearings lay far apart from one another in the wilderness. Up to the door-sills of the log-huts stretched the solemn and mysterious forest. There were no openings to break its continuity; nothing but endless leagues on leagues of shadowy, wolf-haunted woodland. The great trees towered aloft till their separate heads were lost in the mass of foliage above, and the rank underbrush choked the spaces between the trunks. On the higher peaks and ridge-crests of the mountains there were straggling birches and pines, hemlocks and balsam firs; elsewhere, oaks, chestnuts, hickories, maples, beeches, walnuts, and great tulip trees grew side by side with many other kinds. The sunlight could not penetrate the roofed archway of murmuring leaves; through the gray aisles of the forest men walked always in a kind of mid-day gloaming. Those who had lived in the open plains felt when they came to the back-woods as if their heads were hooded. Save on the border of a lake from a cliff top, or on a bald knob—that is, a bare hill-shoulder,—they could not anywhere look out for any distance.

All the land was shrouded in one vast forest

It covered the mountains from crest to river-bed, filled the plains, and stretched in somber and melancholy wastes towards the Mississippi. All that it contained, all that lay hid within it and beyond it, none could tell; men only knew that their boldest hunters, however deeply they had penetrated, had not yet gone through it, that it was the home of the game they followed and the wild beasts that preyed on their flocks, and that deep in its tangled depths lurked their red foes, hawk-eyed and wolf-hearted.

### III. THEIR DAILY LIFE AND THEIR DRESS.

Backwoods society was simple, and the duties and rights of each member of the family were plain and clear. The man was the armed protector and provider, the bread-winner; the woman was the housewife and mother. They married young and their families were large, for they were strong and healthy, and their success in life depended on their own stout arms and willing hearts. There was everywhere great equality of conditions. Land was plenty and all else scarce; so courage, thrift, and industry were sure of their reward. All had small farms, with the few stock necessary to cultivate them; the farms being generally placed in the hollows, the divi-

sion lines between them, if they were close together, being the tops of the ridges and the water-courses, especially the former. The buildings of each farm were usually at its lowest point, as if in the center of an amphitheater. Each was on an average of about 400 acres, but sometimes more. Tracts of low, swampy grounds, possibly some miles from the cabin, were cleared for meadows, the fodder being stacked, and hauled home in winter.

Each backwoodsman was not only a small farmer but also a hunter; for his wife and children depended for their meat upon the venison and bear's flesh procured by his rifle. The people were restless and always on the move. After being a little while in a place, some of the men would settle down permanently, while others would again drift off, farming and hunting alternately to support their families. The backwoodsman's dress was in great part borrowed from his Indian foes. He wore a fur cap or felt hat, moccasins, and either loose, thin trousers, or else simply leggings of buckskin or elk-hide, and the Indian breech-clout. He was always clad in the fringed hunting-shirt, of homespun or buckskin, the most picturesque and distinctively national dress ever worn in America. It was a loose smock or tunic, reaching nearly



“The backwoodsman’s dress was borrowed from his  
Indian foes.”



to the knees, and held in at the waist by a broad belt, from which hung the tomahawk and scalp-ing-knife. His weapon was the long, small-bore, flint-lock rifle, clumsy, and ill-balanced, but exceedingly accurate. It was very heavy, and when upright, reached to the chin of a tall man; for the barrel of thick, soft iron, was four feet in length, while the stock was short, and the butt scooped out. Sometimes it was plain, sometimes ornamented. It was generally bored out—or, as the expression then was, “sawed out”—to carry a ball of seventy, more rarely of thirty or forty, to the pound; and was usually of backwoods manufacture. The marksman almost always fired from a rest, and rarely at a very long range; and the shooting was marvelously accurate.

In the backwoods there was very little money; barter was the common form of exchange, and peltries were often used as a circulating medium, a beaver, otter, fisher, dressed buckskin or large bear-skin being reckoned as equal to two foxes or wildcats, four coons, or eight minks. A young man inherited nothing from his father but his strong frame and eager heart; but before him lay a whole continent wherein to pitch his farm, and he felt ready to marry as soon as he became of age, even though he had nothing but his



clothes, his horses, his ax and his rifle. If a girl was well off, and had been careful and industrious, she might herself bring a dowry, of a cow and a calf, a brood mare, a bed well stocked with blankets, and a chest containing her clothes—the latter not very elaborate, for a woman's dress consisted of a hat or poke bonnet, a "bed gown," perhaps a jacket, and a linsey petticoat, while her feet were thrust into coarse shoepacks or moc-casins. Fine clothes were rare; a suit of such cost more than 200 acres of good land.

The first lesson the backwoodsmen learned was the necessity of self-help; the next, that such a community could only thrive if all joined in helping one another. Log-rollings, house-raising, house-warmings, corn-shuckings, quiltings, and the like were occasions when all the neighbors came together to do what the family itself could hardly accomplish alone. Every such meeting was the occasion of a frolic and dance for the young people, and the host exerting his utmost power to spread the table with backwoods delicacies—bear-meat and venison, vegetables from the "truck patch," where squashes, melons, beans, and the like were grown, wild fruits, bowls of milk, and apple pies, which were the acknowledged standard of luxury. At the better houses there was metheglin or small beer, cider,



cheese, and biscuits. Tea was so little known that many of the backwoods people were not aware it was a beverage and at first attempted to eat the leaves with salt or butter.

The young men prided themselves on their bodily strength, and were always eager to contend against one another in athletic games, such as wrestling, racing, jumping, and lifting flour-barrels; and they also sought distinction in vieing with one another at their work. Sometimes they strove against one another singly, sometimes they divided into parties, each bending all its energies to be first in shucking a given heap of corn or cutting (with sickles) an allotted patch of wheat. Among the men the bravos or bullies often were dandies also in the backwoods fashions, wearing their hair long and delighting in the rude finery of hunting-shirts embroidered with porcupine quills; they were loud, boastful, and profane, given to coarsely bantering one another. Brutally savage fights were frequent; the combatants, who were surrounded by rings of interested spectators, striking, kicking, biting, and gouging. The fall of one of them did not stop the fight, for the man who was down was maltreated without mercy until he called "enough." The victor always bragged savagely of his prowess, often leaping on a stump, crow-

ing and flapping his arms. This last was a thoroughly American touch; but otherwise one of these contests was less a boxing match than a kind of backwoods *pancratium*, no less revolting than its ancient prototype of Olympic fame. Yet, if the uncouth borderers were as brutal as the highly polished Greeks, they were more manly; defeat was not necessarily considered disgrace, a man often fighting when he was certain to be beaten, while the onlookers neither hooted nor pelted the conquered. We first hear of the noted scout and Indian fighter, Simon Kenton, as leaving a rival for dead after one of these ferocious duels, and fleeing from his home in terror of the punishment that might follow the deed. Such fights were specially frequent when the backwoodsmen went into the little frontier towns to see horse races or fairs.

A wedding was always a time of festival. If there was a church anywhere near, the bride rode thither on horseback behind her father, and after the service her pillion was shifted to the bridegroom's steed. If, as generally happened, there was no church, the groom and his friends, all armed, rode to the house of the bride's father, the men racing recklessly along the narrow bridle-paths, for there were few roads or wheeled vehicles in the backwoods. At the bride's house

the ceremony was performed, and then a huge dinner was eaten; after which the fiddling and dancing began, and were continued all the afternoon, and most of the night as well. The fun was hearty and coarse, and the toasts always included one to the young couple, with the wish that they might have many big children; for as long as they could remember the backwoodsmen had lived at war, while looking ahead they saw no chance of its ever stopping, and so each son was regarded as a future warrior, a help to the whole community. The neighbors all joined again in chopping and rolling the logs for the young couple's future house, then in raising the house itself, and finally in feasting and dancing at the house-warming.

Funerals were simple, the dead body being carried to the grave in a coffin slung on poles and borne by four men.

There was not much schooling, and few boys or girls learned much more than reading, writing, and ciphering up to the rule of three. Where the school-houses existed they were only dark, mean log-huts, and if in the southern colonies, were generally placed in the so-called "old fields," or abandoned farms grown up with pines. The schoolmaster boarded about with the families; his learning was rarely great, nor was his

discipline good, in spite of the frequency and severity of the canings. The price for such tuition was at the rate of twenty shillings a year, in Pennsylvania currency.

Each family did every thing that could be done for itself. The father and sons worked with ax, hoe, and sickle. Almost every house contained a loom, and almost every woman was a weaver. Linsey-woolsey, made from flax grown near the cabin, and of wool from the backs of the few sheep, was the warmest and most substantial cloth; and when the flax crop failed and the flocks were destroyed by wolves, the children had but scanty covering to hide their nakedness. The man tanned the buckskin, the woman was tailor and shoemaker, and made the deer-skin sifters to be used instead of bolting-cloths. There were a few pewter spoons in use; but the table furniture consisted mainly of hand-made trenchers, platters, noggins, and bowls. The cradle was of peeled hickory bark. Plow-shares had to be imported, but harrows and sleds were made without difficulty; and the cooper work was well done. Chaff beds were thrown on the floor of the loft, if the house-owner was well off. Each cabin had a hand-mill and a hominy block; the last was borrowed from the Indians, and was only a large block of wood, with a hole

burned in the top, as a mortar, where the pestle was worked. If there were any sugar maples accessible, they were tapped every year.

But some articles, especially salt and iron, could not be produced in the backwoods. In order to get them each family collected during the year all the furs possible, these being valuable and yet easily carried on pack-horses, the sole means of transport. Then, after seeding time, in the fall, the people of a neighborhood ordinarily joined in sending down a train of peltry-laden pack-horses to some large sea-coast or tidal-river trading town, where their burdens were bartered for the needed iron and salt. The unshod horses all had bells hung round their neck; the clappers were stopped during the day, but when the train was halted for the night, and the horses were hobbled and turned loose, the bells were once more unstopped. Several men accompanied each little caravan, and sometimes they drove with them steers and hogs to sell on the sea-coast. A bushel of alum salt was worth a good cow and calf, and as each of the poorly fed, undersized pack animals could carry but two bushels, the mountaineers prized it greatly, and instead of salting or pickling their venison, they jerked it, by drying it in the sun or smoking it over a fire.

## IV. THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.

The life of the backwoodsmen was one long struggle. The forest had to be felled, droughts, deep snows, freshets, cloudbursts, forest fires, and all the other dangers of a wilderness life faced. Swarms of deer-flies, mosquitoes, and midges rendered life a torment in the weeks of hot weather. Rattlesnakes and copperheads were very plentiful, and the former especially, constant sources of danger and death. Wolves and bears were incessant and inveterate foes of the live stock, and the cougar or panther occasionally attacked man as well. More terrible still, the wolves sometimes went mad, and the men who then encountered them were almost certain to be bitten and to die of hydrophobia.

Every true backwoodsman was a hunter. Wild turkeys were plentiful. The pigeons at times filled the woods with clouds that hid the sun and broke down the branches on their roosting grounds as if a whirlwind had passed. The black and gray squirrels swarmed, devastating the corn-fields, and at times gathering in immense companies and migrating across mountain and river. The hunters' ordinary game was the deer, and after that the bear; the elk was already growing uncommon. No form of labor is



harder than the chase, and none is so fascinating nor so excellent as a training-school for war. The successful still-hunter of necessity possessed skill in hiding and in creeping noiselessly upon the wary quarry, as well as in imitating the notes and calls of the different beasts and birds; skill in the use of the rifle and in throwing the tomahawk he already had; and he perforce acquired keenness of eye, thorough acquaintance with woodcraft, and the power of standing the severest strains of fatigue, hardship and exposure. He lived out in the woods for many months with no food but meat, and no shelter whatever, unless he made a lean-to of brush or crawled into a hollow sycamore.

Such training stood the frontier folk in good stead when they were pitted against the Indians; without it they could not even have held their own, and the white advance would have been absolutely checked. Our frontiers were pushed westward by the warlike skill and adventurous personal prowess of the individual settlers; regular armies by themselves could have done little. For one square mile the regular armies added to our domain, the settlers added ten,—a hundred would probably be nearer the truth. A race of peaceful, unwarlike farmers would have been helpless before such foes as the red Indians, and

no auxiliary military force would have protected them or enabled them to move westward. Colonists fresh from the old world, no matter how thrifty, steady-going, and industrious, could not hold their own on the frontier; they had to settle where they were protected from the Indians by a living barrier of bold and self-reliant American borderers. The west would never have been settled save for the fierce courage and the eager desire to brave danger so characteristic of the stalwart backwoodsmen.

These armed hunters, woodchoppers, and farmers were their own soldiers. They built and manned their own forts; they did their own fighting under their own commanders. There were no regiments of regular troops along the frontier. In the event of an Indian inroad each borderer had to defend himself until there was time for them all to gather together to repel or avenge it. Every man was accustomed to the use of arms from his childhood; when a boy was twelve years old he was given a rifle and made a fort-soldier, with a loophole where he was to stand if the station was attacked. The war was never-ending, for even the times of so-called peace were broken by forays and murders; a man might grow from babyhood to middle age on the border, and yet never remember a year in which



some one of his neighbors did not fall a victim to the Indians.

There was everywhere a rude military organization, which included all the able-bodied men of the community. Every settlement had its colonels and captains; but these officers, both in their training and in the authority they exercised, corresponded much more nearly to Indian chiefs than to the regular army men whose titles they bore. They had no means whatever of enforcing their orders, and their tumultuous and disorderly levies of sinewy riflemen were hardly as well disciplined as the Indians themselves. The superior officer could advise, entreat, lead, and influence his men, but he could not command them, or, if he did, the men obeyed him only just so far as it suited them. If an officer planned a scout or campaign, those who thought proper accompanied him, and the others stayed at home, and even those who went out came back if the fit seized them, or perchance followed the lead of an insubordinate junior officer whom they liked better than they did his superior. There was no compulsion to perform military duties beyond dread of being disgraced in the eyes of the neighbors, and there was no pecuniary reward for performing them; nevertheless, the moral sentiment of a backwoods community was too robust to tol-

erate habitual remissness in military affairs, and the coward and laggard were treated with utter scorn, and were generally in the end either laughed out, or "hated out," of the neighborhood, or else got rid of in a still more summary manner. Among a people naturally brave and reckless, this public opinion acted fairly effectively, and there was generally but little shrinking from military service.

A backwoods levy was formidable because of the high average courage and prowess of the individuals composing it; it was on its own ground much more effective than a like force of regular soldiers, but of course it could not be trusted on a long campaign. The backwoodsmen used their rifles better than the Indians, and also stood punishment better, but they never matched them in surprises nor in skill in taking advantage of cover, and very rarely equaled their discipline in the battle itself. After all, the pioneer was primarily a husbandman; the time spent in chopping trees and tilling the soil his foe spent in preparing for or practising forest warfare, and so the former, thanks to the exercise of the very qualities which in the end gave him the possession of the soil, could not, as a rule, hope to rival his antagonist in the actual conflict itself. When large bodies of the red men and white

borderers were pitted against each other, the former were if anything the more likely to have the advantage. But the whites soon copied from the Indians their system of individual and private warfare, and they probably caused their foes far more damage and loss in this way than in the large expeditions. Many noted border scouts and Indian fighters—such men as Boone, Kenton, Wetzel, Brady, McCulloch, Mansker—grew to overmatch their Indian foes at their own game, and held themselves above the most renowned warriors. But these men carried the spirit of defiant self-reliance to such an extreme that their best work was always done when they were alone or in small parties of but four or five. They made long forays after scalps and horses, going a wonderful distance, enduring extreme hardship, risking the most terrible of deaths, and harrying the hostile tribes into a madness of terror and revengeful hatred.

#### V. THE LAW OF THE LAND.

As it was in military matters, so it was with the administration of justice by the frontiersmen; they had few courts, and knew but little law, and yet they contrived to preserve order and morality with rough effectiveness, by combining

to frown down on the grosser misdeeds, and to punish the more flagrant misdoers. Perhaps the spirit in which they acted can be best shown by the recital of an incident in the career of the three McAfee brothers, who were among the pioneer hunters of Kentucky. Previous to trying to move their families out to the new country, they made a cache of clothing, implements, and provisions, which in their absence was broken into and plundered. They caught the thief, "a little diminutive, red-headed white man," a run-away convict servant from one of the tide-water counties of Virginia. In the first impulse of anger at finding that he was the criminal, one of the McAfees rushed at him to kill him with his tomahawk; but the weapon turned, the man was only knocked down, and his assailant's gusty anger subsided as quickly as it had risen, giving way to a desire to do stern but fair justice. So the three captors formed themselves into a court, examined into the case, heard the man in his own defence, and after due consultation decided that "according to their opinion of the laws he had forfeited his life, and ought to be hung"; but none of them were willing to execute the sentence in cold blood, and they ended by taking their prisoner back to his master.

The incident was characteristic in more than

one way. The prompt desire of the backwoodsman to avenge his own wrong; his momentary furious anger, speedily quelled and replaced by a dogged determination to be fair but to exact full retribution; the acting entirely without regard to legal forms or legal officials, but yet in a spirit which spoke well for the doer's determination to uphold the essentials that make honest men law-abiding; together with the good faith of the whole proceeding, and the amusing ignorance that it would have been in the least unlawful to execute their own rather harsh sentence—all these were typical frontier traits.

The McAfees themselves and the escaped convict servant whom they captured typify the two prominent classes of the backwoods people. The frontier, in spite of the outward uniformity of means and manners, is preëminently the place of sharp contrasts. The two extremes of society, the strongest, best, and most adventurous, and the weakest, most shiftless, and vicious, are those which seem naturally to drift to the border. Most of the men who came to the backwoods to hew out homes and rear families were stern, manly, and honest; but there was also a large influx of people drawn from the worst immigrants that perhaps ever were brought to America—the mass of convict servants, redemptioners, and the

like, who formed such an excessively undesirable substratum to the otherwise excellent population of the tide-water regions in Virginia and the Carolinas. Many of the southern crackers or poor whites spring from this class, which also in the backwoods gave birth to generations of violent and hardened criminals, and to an even greater number of shiftless, lazy, cowardly cumberers of the earth's surface. They had in many places a permanently bad effect upon the tone of the whole community.

In the backwoods the lawless led lives of abandoned wickedness; they hated good for good's sake, and did their utmost to destroy it. Where the bad element was large, gangs of horse thieves, highwaymen, and other criminals often united with the uncontrollable young men of vicious tastes who were given to gambling, fighting, and the like. They then formed half-secret organizations, often of great extent and with wide ramifications; and if they could control a community they established a reign of terror, driving out both ministers and magistrates, and killing without scruple those who interfered with them. The good men in such a case banded themselves together as regulators and put down the wicked with ruthless severity, by the exercise



of lynch law, shooting and hanging the worst off-hand.

Jails were scarce in the wilderness, and often were entirely wanting in a district, which, indeed, was quite likely to lack legal officers also. If punishment was inflicted at all it was apt to be severe, and took the form of death or whipping. An impromptu jury of neighbors decided with a rough and ready sense of fair play and justice what punishment the crime demanded, and then saw to the execution of their own decree. Whipping was the usual reward of theft. Occasionally torture was resorted to, but not often; but to their honor be it said, the backwoodsmen were horrified at the treatment accorded both to black slaves and to white convict servants in the lowlands.

They were superstitious, of course, believing in witchcraft, and signs and omens; and it may be noted that their superstition showed a singular mixture of old-world survivals and of practices borrowed from the savages or evolved by the very force of their strange surroundings. At the bottom they were deeply religious in their tendencies; and although ministers and meeting-houses were rare, yet the backwoods cabins often contained Bibles, and the mothers used to instil

into the minds of their children reverence for Sunday, while many even of the hunters refused to hunt on that day. Those of them who knew the right honestly tried to live up to it, in spite of the manifold temptations to backsliding offered by their lives of hard and fierce contention. But Calvinism, though more congenial to them than Episcopacy, and infinitely more so than Catholicism, was too cold for the fiery hearts of the borderers; they were not stirred to the depths of their natures till other creeds, and, above all, Methodism, worked their way to the wilderness.

Thus the backwoodsmen lived on the clearings they had hewed out of the everlasting forest; a grim, stern people, strong and simple, powerful for good and evil, swayed by gusts of stormy passion, the love of freedom rooted in their very hearts' core. Their lives were harsh and narrow; they gained their bread by their blood and sweat, in the unending struggle with the wild ruggedness of nature. They suffered terrible injuries at the hands of the red men, and on their foes they waged a terrible warfare in return. They were relentless, revengeful, suspicious, knowing neither ruth nor pity; they were also upright, resolute, and fearless, loyal to their



friends, and devoted to their country. In spite of their many failings, they were of all men the best fitted to conquer the wilderness and hold it against all comers.



**GEORGE ROGERS CLARK AND THE  
CONQUEST OF THE NORTHWEST**



## GEORGE ROGERS CLARK AND THE CONQUEST OF THE NORTHWEST

**I**N 1776, when independence was declared, the United States included only the thirteen original States on the sea-board. With the exception of a few hunters there were no white men west of the Alleghany Mountains, and there was not even an American hunter in the great country out of which we have since made the States of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin. All this region north of the Ohio River then formed a part of the Province of Quebec. It was a wilderness of forests and prairies, teeming with game, and inhabited by many warlike tribes of Indians.

Here and there through it were dotted quaint little towns of French Creoles, the most important being Detroit, Vincennes on the Wabash, and Kaskaskia and Cahokia on the Illinois. These French villages were ruled by British officers commanding small bodies of regular soldiers or Tory rangers and Creole partizans. The towns were completely in the power of the Brit-

ish government; none of the American States had actual possession of a foot of property in the Northwestern Territory.

The Northwest was acquired in the midst of the Revolution only by armed conquest, and if it had not been so acquired, it would have remained a part of the British Dominion of Canada.

The man to whom this conquest was due was a famous backwoods leader, a mighty hunter, a noted Indian-fighter, George Rogers Clark. He was a very strong man, with light hair and blue eyes. He was of good Virginian family. Early in his youth he embarked on the adventurous career of a backwoods surveyor, exactly as Washington and so many other young Virginians of spirit did at that period. He traveled out to Kentucky soon after it was founded by Boone, and lived there for a year, either at the stations or camping by himself in the woods, surveying, hunting, and making war against the Indians like any other settler; but all the time his mind was bent on vaster schemes than were dreamed of by the men around him. He had his spies out in the Northwestern Territory, and became convinced that with a small force of resolute backwoodsmen he could conquer it for the United States. When he went back to Virginia,

Governor Patrick Henry entered heartily into Clark's schemes and gave him authority to fit out a force for his purpose.

In 1778, after encountering endless difficulties and delays, he finally raised a hundred and fifty backwoods riflemen. In May they started down the Ohio in flatboats to undertake the allotted task. They drifted and rowed downstream to the Falls of the Ohio, where Clark founded a log-hamlet, which has since become the great city of Louisville.

Here he halted for some days and was joined by fifty or sixty volunteers; but a number of the men deserted, and when, after an eclipse of the sun, Clark again pushed off to go down with the current, his force was but about one hundred and sixty riflemen. All, however, were men on whom he could depend—men well used to frontier warfare. They were tall, stalwart backwoodsmen, clad in the hunting-shirt and leggings that formed the national dress of their kind, and armed with the distinctive weapon of the backwoods, the long-barreled, small-bore rifle.

Before reaching the Mississippi the little flotilla landed, and Clark led his men northward against the Illinois towns. In one of them, Kaskaskia, dwelt the British commander of the entire district up to Detroit. The small garrison

and the Creole militia taken together outnumbered Clark's force, and they were in close alliance with the Indians roundabout. Clark was anxious to take the town by surprise and avoid bloodshed, as he believed he could win over the Creoles to the American side. Marching cautiously by night and generally hiding by day, he came to the outskirts of the little village on the evening of July 4, and lay in the woods near by until after nightfall.

Fortune favored him. That evening the officers of the garrison had given a great ball to the mirth-loving Creoles, and almost the entire population of the village had gathered in the fort, where the dance was held. While the revelry was at its height, Clark and his tall backwoodsmen, treading silently through the darkness, came into the town, surprised the sentries, and surrounded the fort without causing any alarm.

All the British and French capable of bearing arms were gathered in the fort to take part in or look on at the merrymaking. When his men were posted Clark walked boldly forward through the open door, and, leaning against the wall, looked at the dancers as they whirled around in the light of the flaring torches. For some moments no one noticed him. Then an Indian who had been lying with his chin on his hand,



looking carefully over the gaunt figure of the stranger, sprang to his feet and uttered the wild war-whoop. Immediately the dancing ceased and the men ran to and fro in confusion; but Clark, stepping forward, bade them be at their ease, but to remember that henceforth they danced under the flag of the United States, and not under that of Great Britain.

The surprise was complete and no resistance was attempted. For twenty-four hours the Creoles were in abject terror. Then Clark summoned their chief men together and explained that he came as their ally and not as their foe, and that if they would join with him they should be citizens of the American republic and treated in all respects on an equality with their comrades. The Creoles, caring little for the British, and rather fickle of nature, accepted the proposition with joy and with the most enthusiastic loyalty toward Clark. Not only that, but sending messengers to their kinsmen on the Wabash, they persuaded the people of Vincennes likewise to cast off their allegiance to the British king and to hoist the American flag.

So far, Clark had conquered with greater ease than he had dared to hope. But when the news reached the British governor, Hamilton, at Detroit, he at once prepared to reconquer the land.

He had much greater forces at his command than Clark had; and in the fall of that year he came down to Vincennes by stream and portage, in a great fleet of canoes bearing five hundred fighting men—British regulars, French partizans and Indians. The Vincennes Creoles refused to fight against the British, and the American officer who had been sent thither by Clark had no alternative but to surrender.

If Hamilton had then pushed on and struck Clark in Illinois, having more than treble Clark's force, he could hardly have failed to win the victory; but the season was late and the journey so difficult that he did not believe it could be taken. Accordingly he disbanded the Indians and sent some of his troops back to Detroit, announcing that when spring came he would march against Clark in Illinois.

If Clark in turn had awaited the blow he would have surely met defeat; but he was a greater man than his antagonist, and he did what the other deemed impossible.

Finding that Hamilton had sent home some of his troops and dispersed all his Indians, Clark realized that his chance was to strike before Hamilton's soldiers assembled again in the spring. Accordingly he gathered together the pick of his men, together with a few Creoles, one hundred



“All day long the troops waded in icy water.”



and seventy all told, and set out for Vincennes. At first the journey was easy enough, for they passed across the snowy Illinois prairies, broken by great reaches of lofty woods. They killed elk, buffalo and deer for food, there being no difficulty in getting all they wanted to eat; and at night they built huge fires by which to sleep, and feasted "like Indian war-dancers," as Clark said in his report.

But when, in the middle of February, they reached the drowned lands of the Wabash, where the ice had just broken up and everything was flooded, the difficulties seemed almost insuperable and the march became painful and laborious to a degree. All day long the troops waded in the icy water and at night they could with difficulty find some little hillock on which to sleep. Only Clark's indomitable courage and cheerfulness kept the party in heart and enabled them to persevere. However, persevere they did, and at last, on February 23, they came in sight of the town of Vincennes. They captured a Creole who was out shooting ducks, and from him learned that their approach was utterly unsuspected and that there were many Indians in town.

Clark was now in some doubt as to how to make his fight. The British regulars dwelt in a

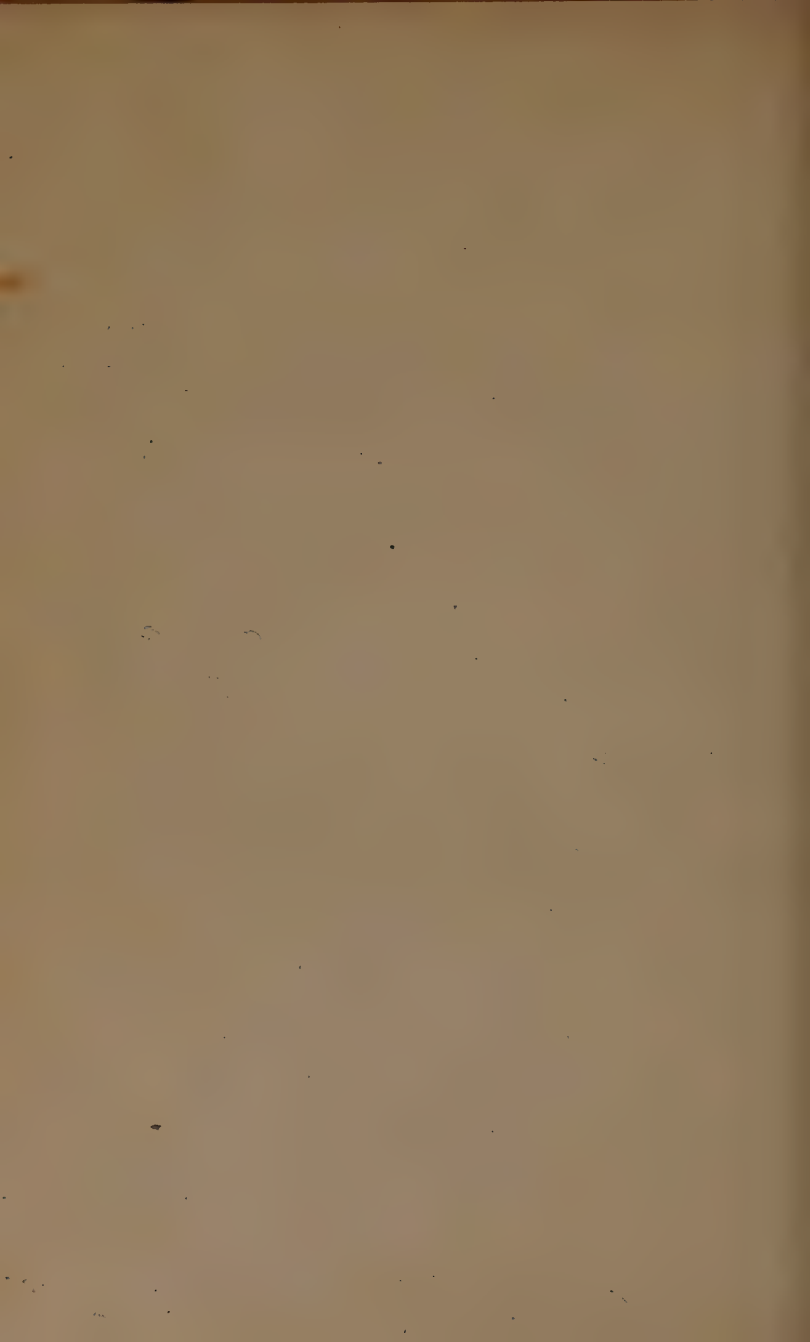
small fort at one end of the town, where they had two light guns; but Clark feared lest if he made a sudden night attack the townspeople and Indians would from sheer fright turn against him. He accordingly arranged, just before he himself marched in, to send in the captured duck-hunter, conveying a warning to the Indians and the Creoles that he was about to attack the town, but that his only quarrel was with the British, and that if the other inhabitants would stay in their own homes they would not be molested.

Sending the duck-hunter ahead, Clark took up his march and entered the town just after night-fall. The news conveyed by the released hunter astounded the townspeople and they talked it over eagerly and were in doubt what to do. The Indians, not knowing how great might be the force that would assail the town, at once took refuge in the neighboring woods, while the Creoles retired to their own houses. The British knew nothing of what had happened until the Americans had actually entered the streets of the little village. Rushing forward, Clark's men soon penned the regulars within their fort, where they kept them surrounded all night. The next day a party of Indian warriors, who in the British interest had been ravaging the settlements of Kentucky, arrived and entered the town, igno-

rant that the Americans had captured it. Marching boldly forward to the fort, they suddenly found it beleaguered, and before they could flee they were seized by the backwoodsmen. In their belts they carried the scalps of the slain settlers. The savages were taken red-handed and the American frontiersmen were in no mood to show mercy. All the Indians were tomahawked in sight of the fort.

For some time the British defended themselves well; but at length their guns were disabled, all of the gunners being picked off by the backwoods marksmen, and finally the garrison dared not so much as appear at a port-hole, so deadly was the fire from the long rifles. Under such circumstances Hamilton was forced to surrender.

No attempt was afterward made to molest the Americans in the land they had won, and upon the conclusion of peace the Northwest, which had been conquered by Clark, became part of the United States.





LEWIS AND CLARK AND THE EX-  
PLORATION OF THE FAR WEST



# LEWIS AND CLARK AND THE EXPLORATION OF THE FAR WEST

## I. PURPOSE OF THE EXPLORATION.

**T**HE Far West, the West beyond the Mississippi, had been thrust on Jefferson, and given to the nation, by the rapid growth of the Old West, the West that lay between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi. The actual title to the new territory had been acquired by the United States Government, acting for the whole nation. It remained to explore the territory thus newly added to the national domain. The Government did not yet know exactly what it had acquired, for the land was not only unmapped, but unexplored. Nobody could tell what were the boundary lines which divided it from British America on the north and Mexico on the south, for nobody knew much of the country through which these lines ran; of most of it, indeed, nobody knew anything. On the new maps the country now showed as part of the United States; but the Indians who alone inhabited it were as

little affected by the transfer as was the game they hunted.

Beyond the Mississippi all that was really well known was the territory in the immediate neighborhood of the little French villages near the mouth of the Missouri. The Creole traders of these villages, and an occasional venturesome American, had gone up the Mississippi to the country of the Sioux and the Mandans, where they had trapped and hunted and traded for furs with the Indians. At the northernmost points that they reached they occasionally encountered traders who had traveled south or southwesterly from the wintry regions where the British fur companies reigned supreme. The headwaters of the Missouri were absolutely unknown; nobody had penetrated the great plains, the vast seas of grass through which the Platte, the Little Missouri and the Yellowstone ran. What lay beyond them and between them and the Pacific was not even guessed at. The Rocky Mountains were not known to exist, so far as the territory newly acquired by the United States was concerned, although under the name of "Stonies" their northern extensions in British America were already down on some maps.

The work of exploring these new lands fell, not to the wild hunters and trappers, such as

those who had first explored Kentucky and Tennessee, but to officers of the United States army, leading parties of United States soldiers, in pursuance of the command of the Government or of its representatives. The earliest and most important expeditions of Americans into the unknown country which the nation had just purchased were led by young officers of the regular army.

The first of these expeditions was planned by Jefferson himself and authorized by Congress. Nominally its purpose was in part to find out the most advantageous places for the establishment of trading stations with the Indian tribes over which our Government had acquired the titular suzerainty; but in reality it was purely a voyage of exploration, planned with intent to ascend the Missouri to its head, and thence to cross the continent to the Pacific. The explorers were carefully instructed to report upon the geography, physical characteristics and zoölogy of the region traversed, as well as upon its wild human denizens.

The two officers chosen to carry through the work belonged to families already honorably distinguished for service on the Western border. One was Captain Meriwether Lewis, representatives of whose family had served so prominently

in Dunmore's war; the other was Lieutenant (by courtesy Captain) William Clark, a younger brother of George Rogers Clark. Clark had served with credit through Wayne's campaigns, and had taken part in the victory of the Fallen Timbers. Lewis had seen his first service when he enlisted as a private in the forces which were marshalled to put down the whisky insurrection. Later he served under Clark in Wayne's army. He had also been President Jefferson's private secretary.

## II. START OF THE EXPEDITION.

The young officers started on their trip accompanied by twenty-seven men who intended to make the whole journey. Of this number, one, the interpreter and incidentally the best hunter of the party, was a half-breed; two were French voyageurs; one was a negro servant of Clark; nine were volunteers from Kentucky; and fourteen were regular soldiers. All, however, except the black slave, were enlisted in the army before starting, so that they might be kept under regular discipline. In addition to these twenty-seven men there were seven soldiers and nine voyageurs who started only to go to the Mandan villages on the Missouri, where the party intended to

spend the first winter. They embarked in three large boats, abundantly supplied with arms, powder and lead, clothing, gifts for the Indians, and provisions.

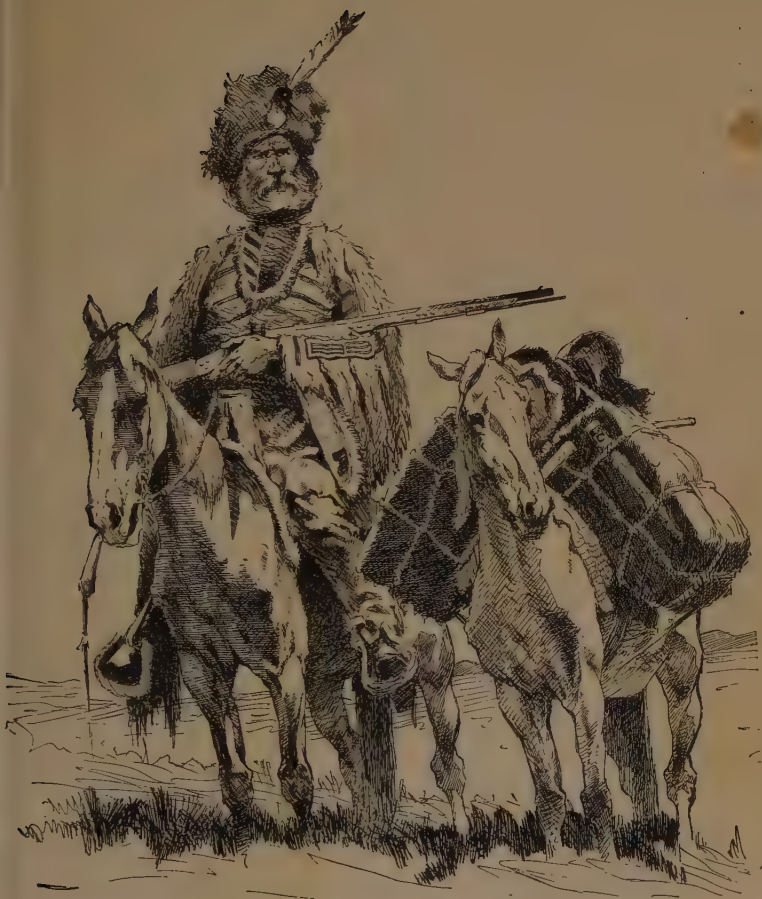
The starting point was St. Louis, which had only just been surrendered to the United States Government by the Spaniards, without any French intermediaries. The explorers pushed off in May, 1804, and soon began stemming the strong current of the muddy Missouri, to whose unknown sources they intended to ascend. For two or three weeks they occasionally passed farms and hamlets. The most important of the little towns was St. Charles, where the people were all Creoles; the explorers in their journal commented upon the good temper and vivacity of these *habitants*, but dwelt on the shiftlessness they displayed and their readiness to sink back towards savagery, although they were brave and hardy enough. The next most considerable town was peopled mainly by Americans, who had already begun to make numerous settlements in the new land. The last squalid little village they passed claimed as one of its occasional residents old Daniel Boone himself.

After leaving the final straggling log cabins of the settled country, the explorers, with sails and paddles, made their way through what is now

the State of Missouri. They lived well, for their hunters killed many deer and wild turkey and some black bear and beaver, and there was an abundance of breeding water fowl. Here and there were Indian encampments, but not many, for the tribes had gone westward to the great plains of what is now Kansas to hunt the buffalo. Already buffalo and elk were scarce in Missouri, and the party did not begin to find them in any numbers until they reached the neighborhood of what is now southern Nebraska.

From there onwards the game was found in vast herds and the party began to come upon those characteristic animals of the Great Plains which were as yet unknown to white men of our race. The buffalo and the elk had once ranged eastward to the Alleghanies and were familiar to early wanderers through the wooded wilderness; but in no part of the east had their numbers ever remotely approached the astounding multitudes in which they were found on the Great Plains. The curious prong-buck or prong-horned antelope was unknown east of the Great Plains. So was the blacktail, or mule deer, which our adventurers began to find here and there as they gradually worked their way northwestward. So were the coyotes, whose uncanny wailing after nightfall varied the sinister bay-





An old-time mountain man with his ponies.



ing of the gray wolves; so were many of the smaller animals, notably the prairie dogs, whose populous villages awakened the lively curiosity of Lewis and Clark.

In their note-books the two captains faithfully described all these new animals and all the strange sights they saw. Few explorers who did and saw so much that was absolutely new have written of their deeds with such quiet absence of boastfulness, and have drawn their descriptions with such complete freedom from exaggeration.

Moreover, what was of even greater importance, the two young captains possessed in perfection the qualities necessary to pilot such an expedition through unknown lands and among savage tribes. They kept good discipline among the men; they never hesitated to punish severely any wrong-doer; but they were never over-severe; and as they did their full part of the work and ran all the risks and suffered all the hardship exactly like the other members of the expedition, they were regarded by their followers with devoted affection and were served with loyalty and cheerfulness.

### III. AMONG THE INDIANS.

In dealing with the Indians they showed good humor and common-sense mingled with ceaseless

vigilance and unbending resolution. Only men who possessed their tact and daring could have piloted the party safely among the warlike tribes they encountered. Any act of weakness or timidity on the one hand, or of harshness or cruelty on the other, would have been fatal to the expedition; but they were careful to treat the tribes well and to try to secure their good-will, while at the same time putting an immediate stop to any insolence or outrage. Several times they were in much jeopardy when they reached the land of the Dakotas and passed among the various ferocious tribes whom they knew, and whom we yet know, as the Sioux. The French traders frequently came up river to the country of the Sioux, who often maltreated and robbed them. In consequence Lewis and Clark found that the Sioux were inclined to regard the whites as people whom they could safely oppress. The resolute bearing of the newcomers soon taught them that they were in error, and after a little hesitation the various tribes in each case became friendly.

With all the Indian tribes the two explorers held councils and distributed presents, especially medals, among the head chiefs and warriors, informing them of the transfer of the territory from Spain to the United States and warning

them that henceforth they must look to the President as their protector and not to the King, whether of England or of Spain. The Indians all professed much satisfaction at the change, which of course they did not in the least understand, and for which they cared nothing. Their easy acquiescence gave much groundless satisfaction to Lewis and Clark, who further, in a spirit of philanthropy, strove to make each tribe swear peace with its neighbors. After some hesitation the tribe usually consented to this also, and the explorers, greatly gratified, passed on. It is needless to say that as soon as they had disappeared the tribes promptly went to war again; and that in reality the Indians had only the vaguest idea as to what was meant by the ceremonies and the hoisting of the American flag. The wonder is that Clark, who had already had some experience with Indians, should have supposed that the councils, advice and proclamations would have any effect of the kind hoped for upon these wild savages.

As the fall weather grew cold the party reached the Mandan village, where they halted and went into camp for the winter, building huts and a stout stockade, which they christened Fort Mandan. Traders from St. Louis and also British traders from the North reached these vil-

lages, and the inhabitants were accustomed to dealing with the whites. Throughout the winter the party was well treated by the Indians, and kept in good health and spirits; the journals frequently mention the fondness the men showed for dancing, although without partners of the opposite sex. Yet they suffered much from the extreme cold, and at times from hunger, for it was hard to hunt in the winter weather, and the game was thin and poor. Generally game could be killed in a day's hunt from the fort; but occasionally small parties of hunters went off for a trip of several days, and returned laden with meat; in one case they killed thirty-two deer, eleven elk and a buffalo; in another forty deer, sixteen elk and three buffalo; thirty-six deer and fourteen elk, etc., etc. The buffalo remaining in the neighborhood during the winter were mostly old bulls, too lean to eat; and as the snows came on most of the antelope left for the rugged country farther west, swimming the Missouri in great bands. Before the bitter weather began the explorers were much interested by the methods of the Indians in hunting, especially when they surrounded and slaughtered bands of buffalo on horseback; and by the curious pens, with huge V-shaped wings, into which they drove antelope.

In the spring of 1805, Lewis and Clark again started westward, first sending down-stream ten of their companions, to carry home the notes of their trip so far, and a few valuable specimens. The party that started westward numbered thirty-two adults, all told; for one sergeant had died and two or three persons had volunteered at the Mandan villages, including a rather worthless French "squaw-man," with an intelligent Indian wife, whose baby was but a few weeks old.

From this point onwards, when they began to travel west instead of north, the explorers were in a country where no white man had ever trod. It was not the first time the continent had been crossed. The Spaniards had crossed and recrossed it, for two centuries, farther south. In British America Mackenzie had already penetrated to the Pacific, while Hearne had made a far more noteworthy and difficult trip than Mackenzie, when he wandered over the terrible desolation of the Barren Grounds, which lie under the Arctic circle. But no man had ever crossed or explored that part of the continent which the United States had just acquired; a part far better fitted to be the home of our stock than the regions to the north or south. It was the explorations of Lewis and Clark, and not those of Mac-



kenzie on the north or of the Spaniards in the south, which were to bear fruit, because they pointed the way to the tens of thousands of settlers who were to come after them, and who were to build thriving commonwealths in the lonely wilderness which they had traversed.

#### IV. IN THE GAME COUNTRY.

From the Little Missouri on to the head of the Missouri proper the explorers passed through a region where they saw few traces of Indians. It literally swarmed with game, for it was one of the finest hunting-grounds in all the world. It so continued for three quarters of a century. Until after 1880 the region around the Little Missouri was essentially unchanged from what it was in the days of Lewis and Clark; game swarmed, and the few white hunters and trappers who followed the buffalo, the elk and the beaver were still at times in conflict with hunting parties from various Indian tribes. While ranching in this region I myself killed every kind of game encountered by Lewis and Clark.

Once, on the return voyage, when Clark was descending the Yellowstone River, a vast herd of buffalo, swimming and wading, plowed its way across the stream where it was a mile broad,

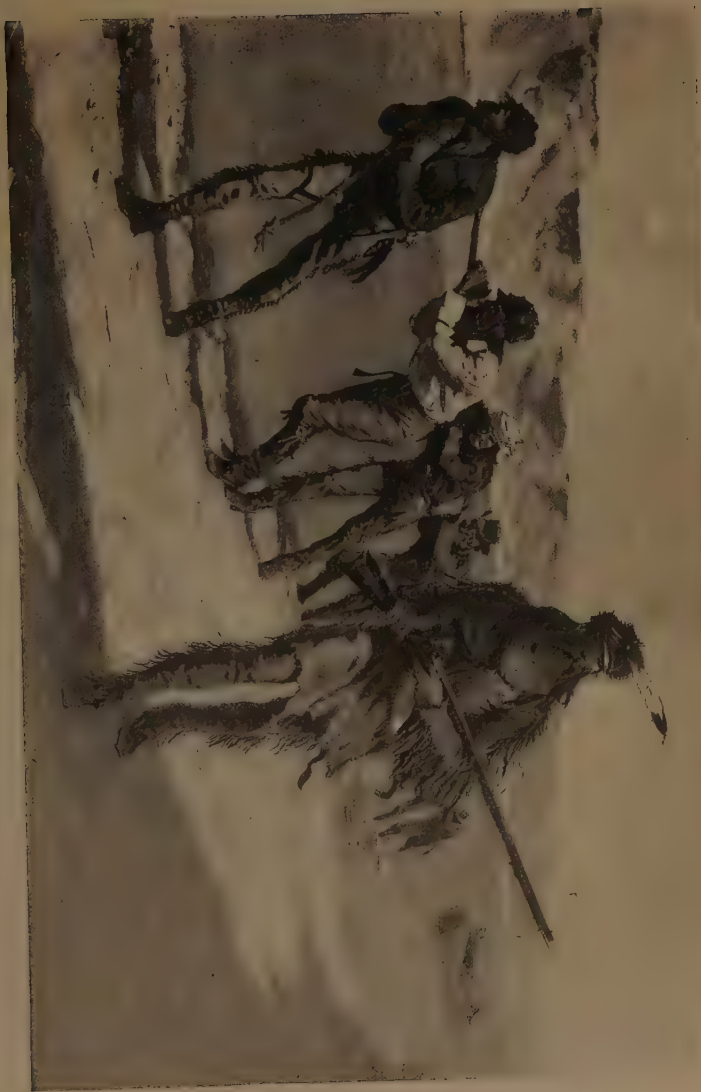


in a column so thick that the explorers had to draw up on shore and wait for an hour, until it passed by, before continuing their journey. Two or three times the expedition was thus brought to a halt; and as the buffalo were so plentiful and so easy to kill, and as their flesh was very good, they were the mainstay for the explorers' table. Both going and returning this wonderful hunting country was a place of plenty. The party of course lived almost exclusively on meat, and they needed much, for, when they could get it, they consumed either a buffalo, or an elk or a deer, or four deer, every day.

There was one kind of game which they at times found altogether too familiar. This was the grizzly bear, which they were the first white men to discover. They called it indifferently the grizzly, gray, brown, and even white bear, to distinguish it from its smaller, glossy, black-coated brother with which they were familiar in the Eastern woods. They found that the Indians greatly feared these bears, and after their first encounters they themselves treated them with much respect. The grizzly was then the burly lord of the Western prairie, dreaded by all other game, and usually shunned even by the Indians. In consequence it was very bold and savage.

Again and again these huge bears attacked the explorers of their own accord, when neither molested nor threatened. They galloped after the hunters when they met them on horseback even in the open; and they attacked them just as freely when they found them on foot. To go through the brush was dangerous; again and again one or another of the party was charged and forced to take to a tree, at the foot of which the bear sometimes mounted guard for hours before going off. When wounded the beasts fought with desperate courage, and showed astonishing tenacity of life, charging any number of assailants, and succumbing but slowly even to mortal wounds. In one case a bear that was on shore actually plunged into the water and swam out to attack one of the canoes as it passed. However, by this time all of the party had become good hunters, expert in the use of their rifles, and they killed great numbers of their ursine foes.

Nor were the bears their only brute enemies. The rattlesnakes were often troublesome. Unlike the bears, the wolves were generally timid, and preyed only on the swarming game; but one night a wolf crept into camp and seized a sleeper by the hand; when driven off he jumped upon another man, and was shot by a third. A less intentional assault was committed by a buffalo



The up-river men.



bull which one night blundered past the fires, narrowly escaped trampling on the sleepers, and had the whole camp in an uproar before it rushed off into the darkness. When hunted the buffalo occasionally charged; but there was not much danger in their chase.

All these larger foes paled into insignificance compared with the mosquitoes. There are very few places on earth where these pests are so formidable as in the bottom lands of the Missouri, and for weeks and even months they made the lives of our explorers a torture. No other danger, whether from hunger or cold, Indians or wild beasts, was so dreaded by the explorers as these tiny scourges.

In the plains country the life of the explorers was very pleasant save only for the mosquitoes and the incessant clouds of driving sand along the river bottoms. On their journey west through these true happy hunting grounds they did not meet with any Indians, and their encounters with the bears were only just sufficiently dangerous to add excitement to their life. Once or twice they were in peril from cloudbursts, and they were lamed by the cactus spines on the prairie, and by the stones and sand of the river bed while dragging the boats against the current; but all these trials, labors and risks

were only enough to give zest to their exploration of the unknown land. At the Great Falls of the Missouri they halted, and were enraptured with their beauty and majesty; and here, as everywhere, they found the game so abundant that they lived in plenty. As they journeyed up-stream through the bright summer weather, though they worked hard, it was work of a kind which was but a long holiday. At nightfall they camped by the boats on the river bank. Each day some of the party spent in hunting, either along the river bottoms through the groves of cottonwoods with shimmering, rustling leaves, or away from the river where the sunny prairies stretched into seas of brown grass, or where groups of rugged hills stood, fantastic in color and outline, and with stunted pines growing on the sides of their steep ravines. The only real suffering was that which occasionally befell someone who got lost, and was out for days at a time, until he exhausted all his powder and lead before finding the party.

Fall had nearly come when they reached the head-waters of the Missouri. The end of the holiday-time was at hand, for they had before them the labor of crossing the great mountains so as to strike the head-waters of the Columbia. Their success at this point depended somewhat

upon the Indian wife of the Frenchman who had joined them at Mandan. She had been captured from one of the Rocky Mountains tribes and they relied on her as interpreter. Partly through her aid, and partly by their own exertions, they were able to find and make friends with a band of wandering Shoshones, from whom they got horses. Having cached their boats and most of their goods, they started westward through the forest-clad passes of the Rockies; before this they wandered and explored in several directions through the mountains and the foot-hills. The open country had been left behind, and with it the time of plenty. In the mountain forests the game was far less abundant than on the plains and far harder to kill.

They now met many Indians of various tribes, all of them very different from the Indians of the Western Plains. At this time the Indians, both east and west of the Rockies, already owned numbers of horses. Although they had a few guns, they relied mainly on the spears and tomahawks, and bows and arrows with which they had warred and hunted from time immemorial; for only the tribes on the outer edges had come in contact with the whites, whether with occasional French and English traders who brought them goods, or with the mixed bloods of the northern



Spanish settlements, upon which they raided. Around the mouth of the Columbia, however, the Indians knew a good deal about the whites; the river had been discovered by Captain Gray of Boston thirteen years before, and ships came there continually, while some of the Indian tribes were occasionally visited by traders from the British fur companies.

With one or two of these tribes the explorers had some difficulty, and owed their safety to their unceasing vigilance, and to the prompt decision with which they gave the Indians to understand that they would tolerate no bad treatment; while yet themselves refraining carefully from committing any wrong. By most of the tribes they were well received, and obtained from them not only information of the route, but also a welcome supply of food. At first they rather shrank from eating the dogs which formed the favorite dish of the Indians; but after a while they grew quite reconciled to dog's flesh; and in their journals noted that they preferred it to lean elk or deer meat, and were much more healthy while eating it.

They reached the rain-shrouded forests of the coast before cold weather set in, and there they passed the winter, suffering somewhat from the weather, and now and then from hunger, though



the hunters generally killed plenty of elk, and deer of the new kind, the blacktail of the Columbia.

#### V. ADVENTURES ON THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY.

In March, 1806, they started eastward to retrace their steps. At first they did not live well, for it was before the time when the salmon came up-stream, and game was not common. When they reached the snow-covered mountains there came another period of toil and starvation, and they were glad indeed when they emerged once more on the happy hunting-grounds of the Great Plains. They found their caches undisturbed. Early in July they separated for a time, Clark descending the Yellowstone and Lewis the Missouri, until they met at the junction of the two rivers. The party which went down the Yellowstone at one time split into two, Clark taking command of one division, and a sergeant of the other; they built their own canoes, some of them made out of hollowed trees, while the others were bull boats, made of buffalo hides stretched on a frame. As before, they reveled in the abundance of the game. They marveled at the incredible numbers of the buffalo whose incessant bellowing at this season filled the air with one

continuous roar, which terrified their horses; they were astonished at the abundance and tameness of the elk; they fought their old enemies, the grizzly bears; and they saw and noted many strange and wonderful beasts and birds.

To Lewis there befell other adventures. Once, while he was out with three men, a party of eight Blackfoot warriors joined them and suddenly made a treacherous attack upon them and strove to carry off their guns and horses. But the wilderness veterans sprang to arms with a readiness that had become second nature. One of them killed an Indian with a knife-thrust; Lewis himself shot another Indian, and the remaining six fled, carrying with them one of Lewis' horses, but losing four of their own, which the whites captured. This was the beginning of the long series of bloody skirmishes between the Blackfeet and the Rocky Mountain explorers and trappers. Clark, at about the same time, suffered at the hands of the Crows, who stole a number of his horses.

None of the party was hurt by the Indians, but some time after the skirmish with the Blackfeet Lewis was accidentally shot by one of the Frenchmen of the party and suffered much from the wound. Near the mouth of the Yellowstone Clark joined him, and the re-united company

floated down the Missouri. Before they reached the Mandan villages they encountered two white men, the first strangers of their own color the party had seen for a year and a half. These were two American hunters named Dickson and Hancock, who were going up to trap the headwaters of the Missouri on their own account. They had come from the Illinois country a year before to hunt and trap; they had been plundered, and one of them wounded, in an encounter with the fierce Sioux, but were undauntedly pushing forwards into the unknown wilderness towards the mountains.

These two hardy and daring adventurers formed the little vanguard of the bands of hunters and trappers, the famous Rocky Mountain men, who were to roam hither and thither across the great West in lawless freedom for the next three quarters of a century. They accompanied the party back to the Mandan village; there one of the soldiers joined them, a man named Colter, so fascinated by the life of the wilderness that he was not willing to leave it, even for a moment's glimpse of the civilization from which he had been so long exiled. The three turned their canoe up-stream, while Lewis and Clark and the rest of the party drifted down past the Sioux.

The further voyage of the explorers was un-

eventful. They had difficulties with the Sioux of course, but they held them at bay. They killed game in abundance, and went downstream as fast as sails, oars and current could carry them. In September they reached St. Louis and forwarded to Jefferson an account of what they had done.

They had done a great deed, for they had opened the door into the heart of the far West. Close on their tracks followed the hunters, trappers and fur traders, who themselves made ready the way for the settlers whose descendants were to possess the land. As for the two leaders of the explorers, Lewis was made Governor of Louisiana Territory, and a couple of years afterwards died, as was supposed, by his own hand, in a squalid log cabin on the Chickasaw trace—though it was never certain that he had not been murdered. Clark was afterwards Governor of the territory, when its name had been changed to Missouri, and he also served honorably as Indian agent. But neither of them did anything further of note; nor indeed was it necessary, for they had performed a feat which will always give them a place on the honor roll of American worthies.

**“REMEMBER THE ALAMO”**



## “REMEMBER THE ALAMO”

**T**HERMOPYLÆ had its messengers of death, but the Alamo had none.” These were the words with which a United States senator referred to one of the most resolute and effective fights ever waged by brave men against overwhelming odds in the face of certain death.

Soon after the close of the second war with Great Britain, parties of American settlers began to press forward into the rich, sparsely settled territory of Texas, then a portion of Mexico. At first these immigrants were well received, but the Mexicans speedily grew jealous of them, and oppressed them in various ways. In consequence, when the settlers felt themselves strong enough, they revolted against Mexican rule, and declared Texas to be an independent republic. Immediately Santa Anna, the Dictator of Mexico, gathered a large army and invaded Texas. The slender forces of the settlers were unable to meet his hosts. They were pressed back by the Mexicans, and dreadful atrocities were committed by Santa Anna and his lieutenants.

In the United States there was great enthusiasm for the struggling Texans, and many bold backwoodsmen and Indian-fighters swarmed to their help. Among them the two most famous were Sam Houston and David Crockett. Houston was the younger man, and had already led an extraordinary and varied career. When a mere lad he ran away from home and joined the Cherokees, living among them for some years; then he returned home. He had fought under Andrew Jackson in his campaigns against the Creeks, and had been severely wounded at the battle of the Horse-shoe Bend. He had risen to the highest political honors in his State, becoming Governor of Tennessee; and then suddenly, in a fit of moody longing for the life of the wilderness, he gave up his Governorship, left the State, and crossed the Mississippi, going to join his old comrades, the Cherokees, in their new home along the waters of the Arkansas. Here he dressed, lived, fought, hunted and drank precisely like any Indian, becoming one of the chiefs.

David Crockett was born soon after the Revolutionary War. He, too, had taken part under Jackson in the campaigns against the Creeks, and had afterward become a man of mark in Tennessee, and gone to Congress as a Whig;



but he had quarreled with Jackson, and been beaten for Congress, and in his disgust he left the State and decided to join the Texans. He was the most famous rifle-shot in all the United States, and the most successful hunter, so that his skill was a proverb all along the border.

David Crockett journeyed south by boat and horse, making his way steadily toward the distant plains where the Texans were waging their life-and-death fight. Texas was a wild place in those days, and the old hunter had more than one hair-breadth escape from Indians, desperadoes, and savage beasts ere he got to the neighborhood of San Antonio, and joined another adventurer, a bee-hunter, bent on the same errand as himself. The two had been in ignorance of exactly what the situation in Texas was; but they soon found that the Mexican army was marching toward San Antonio, whither they were going. Near the town was an old Spanish fort, the Alamo, in which the hundred and fifty American defenders of the place had gathered. Santa Anna had four thousand troops with him. The Alamo was a mere shell, utterly unable to withstand either a bombardment or a regular assault. It was evident, therefore, that those within it would be in the utmost jeopardy if the place were seriously assaulted, but old Crockett and his com-

panion never wavered. They were fearless and resolute, and masters of woodcraft, and they managed to slip through the Mexican lines and join the defenders within the walls. The bravest, the hardiest, the most reckless men of the border were there; among them were Colonel Travis, the commander of the fort, and Bowie, the inventor of the famous bowie-knife. They were a wild and ill-disciplined band, little used to restraint or control, but they were men of iron courage and great bodily powers, skilled in the use of their weapons, and ready to meet with stern and uncomplaining indifference whatever doom fate might have in store for them.

Soon Santa Anna approached with his army, took possession of the town, and besieged the fort. The defenders knew there was scarcely a chance of rescue, and that it was hopeless to expect that one hundred and fifty men, behind defenses so weak, could beat off four thousand trained soldiers, well armed and provided with heavy artillery; but they had no idea of flinching, and made a desperate defense. The days went by, and no help came, while Santa Anna got ready his lines and began a furious cannonade. His gunners were unskilled, however, and he had to serve the guns from a distance; for when they were pushed nearer the American rifle-

men crept forward under cover and picked off the artillerymen. Old Crockett thus killed five men at one gun. But, by degrees, the bombardment told. The walls of the Alamo were battered and riddled; and when they had been breached so as to afford no obstacle to the rush of his soldiers, Santa Anna commanded that they be stormed.

The storming took place on March 6, 1836. The Mexican troops came on well and steadily, breaking through the outer defences at every point, for the lines were too long to be manned by the few Americans. The frontiersmen then retreated to the inner building, and a desperate hand-to-hand conflict followed, the Mexicans thronging in, shooting the Americans with their muskets and thrusting at them with lance and bayonet, while the Americans, after firing their long rifles, clubbed them and fought desperately, one against many; and they also used their bowie-knives and revolvers with deadly effect. The fight reeled to and fro between the shattered walls, each American the center of a group of foes; but, for all their strength and their wild fighting courage, the defenders were too few, and the struggle could have but one end. One by one the tall riflemen succumbed, after repeated thrusts with bayonet and lance, until but

three or four were left. Colonel Travis, the commander, was among them; and so was Bowie, who was sick and weak from a wasting disease, but who rallied all his strength to die fighting, and who, in the final struggle, slew several Mexicans with his revolver, and with his big knife, of the kind to which he had given his name. Then these fell, too, and the last man stood at bay. It was old Davy Crockett. Wounded in a dozen places, he faced his foes with his back to the wall, ringed round by the bodies of the men he had slain. So desperate was the fight he waged that the Mexicans who thronged round about him were beaten back for the moment, and no one dared to run in upon him. Accordingly, while the lancers held him where he was, for, weakened by wounds and loss of blood, he could not break through them, the musketeers loaded their carbines and shot him down. Santa Anna declined to give him mercy. Some say that when Crockett fell from his wounds, he was taken alive, and was then shot by Santa Anna's order; but his fate cannot be told with certainty, for not a single American was left alive. At any rate, after Crockett fell the fight was over. Every one of the hardy men who had held the Alamo lay still in death. Yet they died well

avenged, for four times their number fell at their hands in the battle.

Santa Anna had but a short while in which to exult over the bloody and hard-won victory. Already a rider from the rolling Texas plains, going north through the Indian Territory, had told Houston that the Texans were up and were striving for their liberty. At once in Houston's mind there kindled a longing to return to the men of his race at the time of their need. Mounting his horse, he rode south by night and day, and was hailed by the Texans as a heaven-sent leader. He took command of their forces, eleven hundred stark riflemen, and at the battle of San Jacinto he and his men charged the Mexican hosts with the cry of "Remember the Alamo." Almost immediately the Mexicans were overthrown with terrible slaughter; Santa Anna himself was captured, and the freedom of Texas was won at a blow.



**THE CATTLE COUNTRY  
OF THE FAR WEST**





## PART II

# STORIES OF ADVENTURE

### THE CATTLE COUNTRY OF THE FAR WEST

**T**HE great grazing lands of the West lie in what is known as the arid belt, which stretches from British America on the north to Mexico on the south, through the middle of the United States. It includes New Mexico, part of Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and the western portion of Texas, Kansas, Nebraska and Dakota. It must not be understood by this that more cattle are to be found here than elsewhere, for the contrary is true, it being a fact often lost sight of that the number of cattle raised on the small, thick-lying farms of the fertile Eastern States is actually many times greater than that of those scattered over the vast, barren ranches of the far West; for stock will always be most plentiful in districts where corn and other winter food can be grown. But in this arid belt, and in this arid belt only — save in a few similar tracts on the Pacific slope — stock-raising is almost the sole industry, except in the mountain districts where there is mining.

The whole region is one vast stretch of grazing country, with only here and there spots of farmland, in most places there being nothing more like agriculture than is implied in the cutting of some tons of wild hay or the planting of a garden patch for home use. This is especially true of the northern portion of the region, which comprises the basin of the Upper Missouri, and with which alone I am familiar. Here there are no fences to speak of, and all the land north of the Black Hills and the Big Horn Mountains and between the Rockies and the Dakota wheat-fields might be spoken of as one gigantic, unbroken pasture, where cowboys and branding-irons take the place of fences.

The country throughout this great Upper Missouri basin has a wonderful sameness of character; and the rest of the arid belt, lying to the southward, is closely akin to it in its main features. A traveler seeing it for the first time is especially struck by its look of parched, barren desolation; he can with difficulty believe that it will support cattle at all. It is a region of light rainfall; the grass is short and comparatively scanty; there is no timber except along the beds of the streams, and in many places there are alkali deserts where nothing grows but sagebrush and cactus. Now the land stretches out

into level, seemingly endless plains or into rolling prairies; again it is broken by abrupt hills and deep, winding valleys; or else it is crossed by chains of buttes, usually bare, but often clad with a dense growth of dwarfed pines or gnarled, stunted cedars. The muddy rivers run in broad, shallow beds, which after heavy rainfalls are filled to the brim by the swollen torrents, while in droughts the larger streams dwindle into sluggish trickles of clearer water, and the smaller ones dry up entirely, save in occasional deep pools.

All through the region, except on the great Indian reservations, there has been a scanty and sparse settlement, quite peculiar in its character. In the forest the woodchopper comes first; on the fertile prairies the granger is the pioneer; but on the long, stretching uplands of the far West it is the men who guard and follow the horned herds that prepare the way for the settlers who come after. The high plains of the Upper Missouri and its tributary rivers were first opened, and are still held, by the stockmen, and the whole civilization of the region has received the stamp of their marked and individual characteristics. They were from the South, not from the East, although many men from the latter region came out along the great transconti-

mental railway lines and joined them in their northern migration.

They were not dwellers in towns, and from the nature of their industry lived as far apart from each other as possible. In choosing new ranges, old cow-hands, who are also seasoned plainsmen, are invariably sent ahead, perhaps a year in advance, to spy out the land and pick the best places. One of these may go by himself, or more often, especially if they have to penetrate little known or entirely unknown tracts, two or three will go together, the owner or manager of the herd himself being one of them. Perhaps their herds may already be on the border of the wild and uninhabited country; in that case they may have to take but a few days' journey before finding the stretches of sheltered long-grass land that they seek. For instance, when I wished to move my own elkhorn steer brand on to a new ranch I had to spend barely a week in traveling north among the Little Missouri Bad Lands before finding what was then untrodden ground far outside the range of any of my neighbors' cattle. But if a large outfit is going to shift its quarters it must go much farther; and both the necessity and the chance for long wanderings were especially great when the final overthrow of the northern Horse In-



An episode in the opening up of a cattle country.





Indians opened the whole Upper Missouri basin at one sweep to the stockmen. Then the advance-guards or explorers, each on one horse and leading another with food and bedding, were often absent months at a time, threading their way through the trackless wastes of plain, plateau and river-bottom. If possible they would choose a country that would be good for winter and summer alike; but often this could not be done, and then they would try to find a well-watered tract on which the cattle could be summered, and from which they could be driven in fall to their sheltered winter range—for the cattle in winter eat snow, and an entirely waterless region, if broken, and with good pasturage, is often the best possible winter ground, as it is sure not to have been eaten off at all during the summer; while in the bottoms the grass is always cropped down soonest. Many outfits regularly shift their herds every spring and fall; but with us in the Bad Lands all we do, when cold weather sets in, is to drive our beasts off the scantily grassed river-bottom back ten miles or more among the broken buttes and plateaus of the uplands to where the brown hay, cured on the stalk, stands thick in the winding coulees.

These lookouts or forerunners having returned, the herds are set in motion as early in the spring

as may be, so as to get on the ground in time to let the travel-worn beasts rest and gain flesh before winter sets in. Each herd is accompanied by a dozen, or a score, or a couple of score, of cowboys, according to its size, and beside it rumble and jolt the heavy four-horse wagons that hold the food and bedding of the men and the few implements they will need at the end of their journey. As long as possible they follow the trails made by the herds that have already traveled in the same direction, and when these end they strike out for themselves. In the Upper Missouri basin, the pioneer herds soon had to scatter out and each find its own way among the great dreary solitudes, creeping carefully along so that the cattle should not be overdriven and should have water at the halting-places. An outfit might thus be months on its lonely journey, slowly making its way over melancholy, pathless plains, or down the valleys of the lonely rivers. It was tedious, harassing work, as the weary cattle had to be driven carefully and quietly during the day and strictly guarded at night, with a perpetual watch kept for Indians or white horse-thieves. Often they would skirt the edges of the streams for days at a time, seeking for a ford or a good swimming crossing, and if the water was up and the quicksand deep the danger



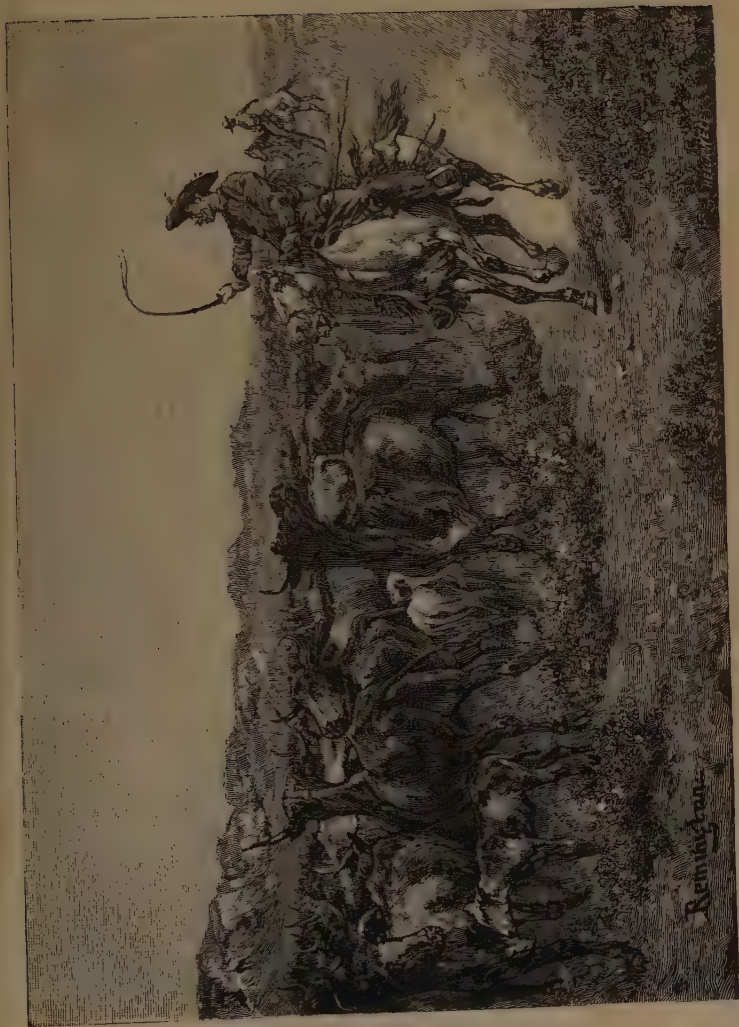
to the riders was serious and the risk of loss among the cattle very great.

At last, after days of excitement and danger and after months of weary, monotonous toil, the chosen ground is reached and the final camp pitched. The footsore animals are turned loose to shift for themselves, outlying camps of two or three men each being established to hem them in. Meanwhile the primitive ranch-house, out-buildings and corrals are built, the unhewn cottonwood logs being chinked with moss and mud, while the roofs are of branches covered with dirt, spades and axes being the only tools needed for the work. Bunks, chairs and tables are all home-made, and as rough as the houses they are in. The supplies of coarse, rude food are carried perhaps two or three hundred miles from the nearest town, either in the ranch-wagons or else by some regular freighting outfit, the huge canvas-topped prairie schooners of which are each drawn by several yoke of oxen, or perhaps by six or eight mules. To guard against numerous mishaps of prairie travel, two or three of these prairie schooners usually go together, the brawny teamsters, known either as "bull-whackers" or as "mule-skinners," stalking beside their slow-moving teams.

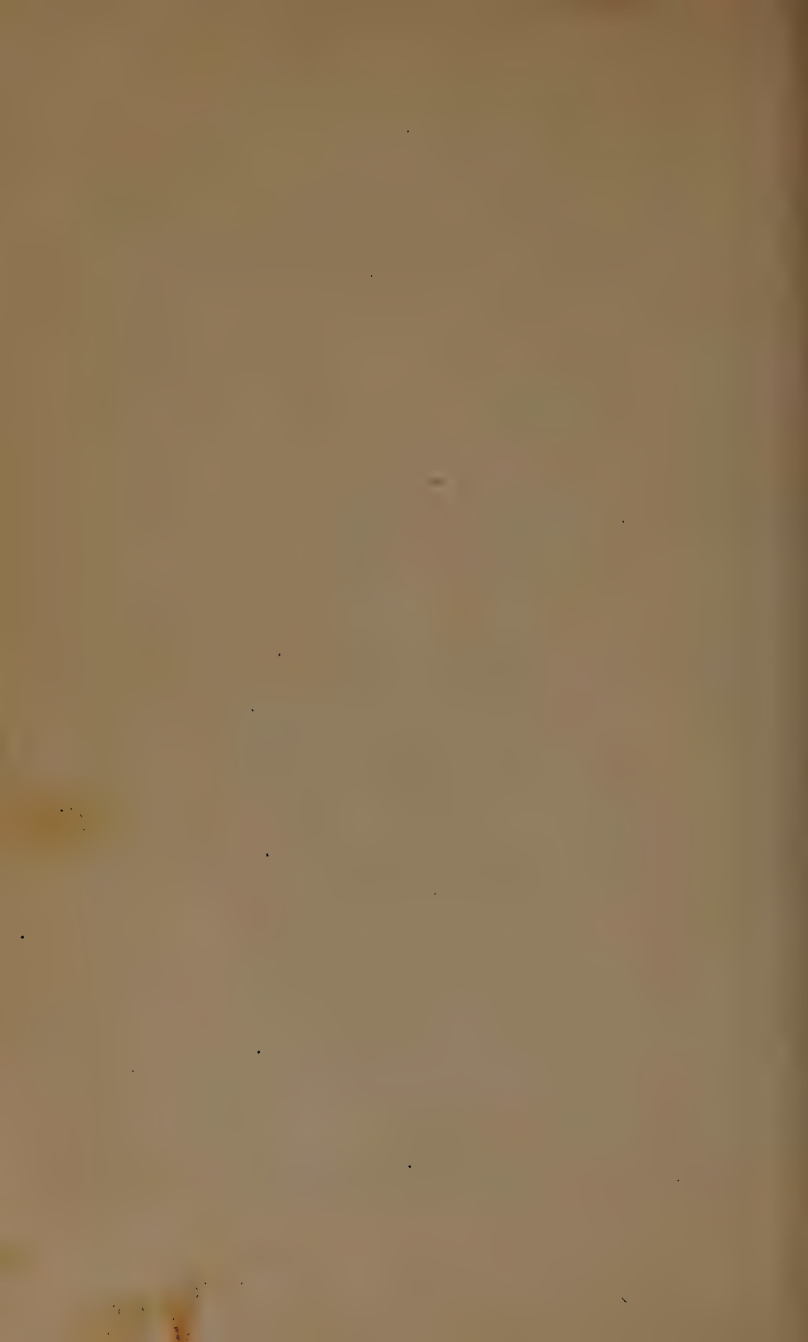
The small outlying camps are often tents, or

mere dug-outs in the ground. But at the main ranch there will be a cluster of log buildings, including a separate cabin for the foreman or ranchman; often another in which to cook and eat; a long house for the men to sleep in; stables, sheds, a blacksmith's shop, etc.,—the whole group forming quite a little settlement, with the corrals, the stacks of natural hay, and the patches of fenced land for gardens or horse pastures. This little settlement may be situated right out in the treeless, nearly level open, but much more often is placed in the partly wooded bottom of a creek or river, sheltered by the usual background of somber brown hills.

When the northern plains began to be settled, such a ranch would at first be absolutely alone in the wilderness, but others of the same sort were sure soon to be established within twenty or thirty miles on one side or the other. The lives of the men in such places were strangely cut off from the outside world, and, indeed, the same is true to a hardly less extent at the present day. Sometimes the wagons are sent for provisions, and the beef-steers are at stated times driven off for shipment. Parties of hunters and trappers call now and then. More rarely small bands of emigrants go by in search of new homes, impelled by the restless, aimless craving for change



Trailing cattle.



so deeply grafted in the breast of the American borderer; the white-topped wagons are loaded with domestic goods, with sallow, dispirited-looking women, and with tow-headed children; while the gaunt, moody frontiersmen slouch alongside, rifle on shoulder, lank, homely, uncouth, and yet with a curious suggestion of grim strength underlying it all. Or cowboys from neighboring ranches will ride over, looking for lost horses, or seeing if their cattle have strayed off the range. But this is all. Civilization seems as remote as if we were living in an age long past. The whole existence is patriarchal in character; it is the life of men who live in the open, who tend their herds on horseback, who go armed and ready to guard their lives by their own prowess, whose wants are very simple, and who call no man master. Ranching is an occupation like those of vigorous, primitive pastoral peoples, having little in common with the humdrum, workaday business world of the nineteenth century; and the free ranchman in his manner of life shows more kinship to an Arab sheik than to a sleek city merchant or tradesman.



## THE HOME RANCH





## THE HOME RANCH

**M**Y home ranch lies on both sides of the Little Missouri, the nearest ranchman above me being about twelve, and the nearest below me about ten, miles distant. The general course of the stream here is northerly, but, while flowing through my ranch, it takes a great westerly reach of some three miles, walled in, as always, between chains of steep, high bluffs half a mile or more apart. The stream twists down through the valley in long sweeps, leaving oval wooded bottoms, first on one side and then on the other; and in an open glade among the thick-growing timber stands the long, low house of hewn logs.

Just in front of the ranch veranda is a line of old cottonwoods that shade it during the fierce heats of summer, rendering it always cool and pleasant. But a few feet beyond these trees comes the cut-off bank of the river, through whose broad, sandy bed the shallow stream winds as if lost, except when a freshet fills it from brim to brim with foaming yellow water. The bluffs that wall in the river-valley curve back in semi-

circles, rising from its alluvial bottom generally as abrupt cliffs, but often as steep, grassy slopes that lead up to great level plateaus; and the line is broken every mile or two by the entrance of a coulee, or dry creek, whose head branches may be twenty miles back. Above us, where the river comes round the bend, the valley is very narrow, and the high buttes bounding it rise, sheer and barren, into scalped hill-peaks and naked knife-blade ridges.

The other buildings stand in the same open glade with the ranch house, the dense growth of cottonwoods and matted, thorny underbrush making a wall all about, through which we have chopped our wagon roads and trodden out our own bridle-paths. The cattle have now trampled down this brush a little, but deer still lie in it, only a couple of hundred yards from the house; and from the door sometimes in the evening one can see them peer out into the open, or make their way down, timidly and cautiously, to drink at the river. The stable, sheds and other outbuildings, with the hayricks and the pens for such cattle as we bring in during the winter, are near the house; the patch of fenced garden land is on the edge of the woods; and near the middle of the glade stands the high, circular horse-corral, with a snubbing-post in the center, and a

wing built out from one side of the gate entrance, so that the saddle-band can be driven in without trouble. As it is very hard to work cattle where there is much brush, the larger cow-corral is some four miles off on an open bottom.

A ranchman's life is certainly a very pleasant one, albeit generally varied with plenty of hardship and anxiety. Although occasionally he passes days of severe toil—for example, if he goes on the round-up he works as hard as any of his men—yet he no longer has to undergo the monotonous drudgery attendant upon the tasks of the cowboy or of the apprentice in the business. His fare is simple; but, if he chooses, it is good enough. Many ranches are provided with nothing at all but salt pork, canned goods and bread; indeed, it is a curious fact that in traveling through the cow country it is often impossible to get any milk or butter; but this is only because the owners or managers are too lazy to take enough trouble to insure their own comfort. We ourselves always keep up two or three cows, choosing such as are naturally tame, and so we invariably have plenty of milk and, when there is time for churning, a good deal of butter. We also keep hens, which, in spite of the damaging inroads of hawks, bob-cats and foxes, supply us with eggs, and in time of need, when

our rifles have failed to keep us in game, with stewed, roast or fried chicken also. From our garden we get potatoes, and unless drought, frost, or grasshoppers interfere (which they do about every second year) other vegetables as well. For fresh meat we depend chiefly upon our prowess as hunters.

During much of the time we are away on the different round-ups, that "wheeled house," the great four-horse wagon, being then our home; but when at the ranch our routine of life is always much the same, save during the excessively bitter weather of midwinter, when there is little to do except to hunt, if the days are fine enough. We breakfast early—before dawn when the nights have grown long, and rarely later than sunrise, even in midsummer. Perhaps before this meal, certainly the instant it is over, the man whose duty it is rides off to hunt up and drive in the saddle-band. Each of us has his own string of horses, eight or ten in number, and the whole band usually split up into two or three companies. In addition to the scattered groups of the saddle-band, our six or eight mares, with their colts, keep by themselves, and are rarely bothered by us, as no cowboy ever rides anything but horses, because mares give great trouble where all the animals have to be herded to-

gether. Once every two or three days somebody rides round and finds out where each of these smaller bands is, but the man who goes out in the morning merely gathers one bunch. He drives these into the corral, the other men (who have been lolling idly about the house or stable, fixing their saddles or doing any odd job) coming out with their ropes as soon as they hear the patter of the unshod hoofs and the shouts of the cowboy driver. Going into the corral, and standing near the center, each of us picks out some one of his own string from among the animals that are trotting and running in a compact mass round the circle; and after one or more trials, according to his skill, ropes it and leads it out. When all have caught their horses the rest are again turned loose, together with those that have been kept up overnight. Some horses soon get tame and do not need to be roped; my pet cutting pony, little Muley, and good old Manitou, my companion in so many hunting trips, will neither of them stay with the rest of their fellows that are jamming and jostling each other as they rush round in the dust of the corral, but they very sensibly walk up and stand quietly with the men in the middle, by the snubbing-post. Both are great pets, Manitou in particular; the wise old fellow being very fond of bread and sometimes coming up of

his own accord to the ranch house and even putting his head into the door to beg for it.

Once saddled, the men ride off on their different tasks; for almost everything is done in the saddle, except that in winter we cut our firewood and quarry our coal—both on the ranch—and in summer attend to the garden and put up what wild hay we need.

If any horses have strayed, one or two of the men will be sent off to look for them; for hunting lost horses is one of the commonest and most irksome of our duties. Every outfit always has certain of its horses at large, and if they remain out long enough they become as wild and wary as deer and have to be regularly surrounded and run down.

If the men do not go horse-hunting they may ride off over the range; for there is generally some work to be done among the cattle, such as driving in and branding calves that have been overlooked by the round-up, or getting some animal out of a bog-hole. During the early spring months, before the round-up begins, the chief work is in hauling out mired cows and steers; and if we did not keep a sharp lookout the losses at this season would be very serious. As long as everything is frozen solid there is, of course, no danger from miring; but when the thaw



comes, along towards the beginning of March, a period of new danger to the cattle sets in. When the ice breaks up, the streams are left with an edging of deep bog, while the quicksand is at its worst. As the frost goes out of the soil, the ground round every little alkali-spring changes into a trembling quagmire, and deep holes of slimy, tenacious mud form in the bottom of all the gullies. The cattle, which have had to live on snow for three or four months, are very eager for water, and are weak and in poor condition. They rush heedlessly into any pool and stand there, drinking gallons of the icy water and sinking steadily into the mud. When they try to get out they are already too deep down, and are too weak to make a prolonged struggle. After one or two fits of desperate floundering they resign themselves to their fate with dumb apathy and are lost, unless some one of us riding about discovers and hauls them out.

When the river is up it is a very common thing for a horseman to have great difficulty in crossing, for the swift, brown water runs over a bed of deep quicksand that is ever shifting. An inexperienced horse, or a mule,—for a mule is useless in mud or quicksand,—becomes mad with fright in such a crossing, and, after speedily exhausting its strength in wild struggles, will

throw itself on its side and drown unless the rider gets it out. An old horse used to such work will, on the contrary, take matters quietly and often push along through really dangerous quicksand. Old Manitou never loses his head for an instant; but, now resting a few seconds, now feeling his way cautiously forward, and now making two or three desperate plunges, will go on wherever a horse possibly can. It is really dangerous crossing some of the creeks, as the bottom may give way where it seems hardest; and if one is alone he may work hours in vain before getting his horse out, even after taking off both saddle and bridle, the only hope being to head it so that every plunge takes it an inch or two in the right direction.

Nor are mud-holes the only danger the horseman has to fear; for in much of the Bad Lands the buttes are so steep and broken that it needs genuine mountaineering skill to get through them, and no horse but a Western one, bred to the business, could accomplish the feat. In many parts of our country it is impossible for a horseman who does not know the land to cross it, and it is difficult enough even for an experienced hand.

Occasionally it is imperatively necessary to cross some of the worst parts of the Bad Lands



with a wagon, and such a trip is exhausting and laborious beyond belief. Often the wagon will have to be taken to pieces every few hundred yards in order to get it over a ravine, lower it into a valley, or drag it up a cliff. One outfit, that a year ago tried to take a short cut through some of the Bad Lands of the Powder River, made just four miles in three days, and then had to come back to their starting-point after all. But with only saddle-horses we feel that it must be a very extraordinary country indeed if, in case of necessity, we cannot go through it.

The long forenoon's work, with its attendant mishaps to man and beast, being over, the men who have been out among the horses and cattle come riding in, to be joined by their fellows—if any there be—who have been hunting, or hay-ing, or chopping wood. The midday dinner is variable as to time, for it comes when the men have returned from their work; but, whatever be the hour, it is the most substantial meal of the day, and we feel that we have little fault to find with a table on the clean cloth of which are spread platters of smoked elk meat, loaves of good bread, jugs and bowls of milk, saddles of venison or broiled antelope steaks, perhaps roast and fried prairie chickens, with eggs, butter, wild plums, and tea or coffee.

The afternoon's tasks are usually much the same as the morning's, but this time is often spent in doing the odds and ends; as, for instance, it may be devoted to breaking-in a new horse. Large outfits generally hire a bronco-buster to do this; but we ourselves almost always break our own horses, two or three of my men being pretty good riders, although none of them can claim to be anything out of the common. A first-class flash rider or bronco-buster receives high wages, and deserves them, for he follows a most dangerous trade, at which no man can hope to grow old; his work being infinitely harder than that of an Eastern horse-breaker or rough-rider, because he has to do it in such a limited time. A good rider is a good rider all the world over; but an Eastern or English horse-breaker and Western bronco-buster have so little in common with each other as regards style or surroundings, and are so totally out of place in doing each other's work, that it is almost impossible to get either to admit that the other has any merits at all as a horseman, for neither could sit in the saddle of the other or could without great difficulty perform his task. The ordinary Eastern seat, which approaches more or less the seat of a cross-country rider or fox-hunter, is nearly as different from the cowboy's seat as from that of a man

who rides bareback. The stirrups on a stock saddle are much farther back than they are on an ordinary English one (a difference far more important than the high horn and cantle of the former), and the man stands nearly erect in them, instead of having his legs bent; and he grips with the thighs and not with the knees, throwing his feet well out. Some of the things he teaches his horse would be wholly useless to an Eastern equestrian: for example, one of the first lessons the newly-caught animal has to learn is not to "run on a rope"; and he is taught this by being violently snubbed up, probably turning a somersault, the first two or three times that he feels the noose settle round his neck, and makes a mad rush for liberty. The snubbing-post is the usual adjunct in teaching such a lesson; but a skillful man can do without any help and throw a horse clean over by holding the rope tight against the left haunch, at the same time leaning so far back, with the legs straight in front, that the heels dig deep into the ground when the strain comes, and the horse, running out with the slack of the rope, is brought up standing, or even turned head over heels by the shock. Cowboys are probably the only working-men in the world who invariably wear gloves, buckskin gauntlets being preferred, as otherwise the ropes would

soon take every particle of skin off their hands.

A bronco-buster has to work by such violent methods in consequence of the short amount of time at his command. Horses are cheap, each outfit has a great many, and the wages for breaking an animal are but five or ten dollars. Three rides, of an hour or two each, on as many consecutive days, are the outside number a bronco-buster deems necessary before turning an animal over as "broken." The average bronco-buster, however, handles horses so very rudely that we prefer, aside from motives of economy, to break our own; and this is always possible, if we take enough time. The best and quietest horses on the ranch are far from being those broken by the best riders; on the contrary, they are those that have been handled most gently, although firmly, and that have had the greatest number of days devoted to their education.

Some horses, of course, are almost incurably vicious, and must be conquered by main force. One pleasing brute on my ranch will at times rush at a man open-mouthed like a wolf, and this is a regular trick of the range-stallions.

If not breaking horses, mending saddles or doing something else of the sort, the cowboys will often while away their leisure moments by practising with the rope. A forty-foot lariat is the

one commonly used, for the ordinary range at which a man can throw it is only about twenty-five feet. Few men can throw forty feet; and to do this, taking into account the coil, needs a sixty-foot rope.

When the day's work is over we take supper, and bed-time comes soon afterward, for the men who live on ranches sleep well and soundly. As a rule, the nights are cool and bracing, even in midsummer; except when we occasionally have a spell of burning weather, with a steady, hot wind that blows in our faces like a furnace blast, sending the thermometer far up above a hundred and making us gasp for breath, even at night, in the dry-baked heat of the air. But it is only rarely that we get a few days of this sort; generally, no matter how unbearable the heat of the day has been, we can at least sleep pleasantly at night.

A ranchman's work is, of course, free from much of the sameness attendant upon that of a mere cowboy. One day he will ride out with his men among the cattle, or after strayed horses; the next day he may hunt, so as to keep the ranch in meat; then he can make the tour of his outlying camps; or, again, may join one of the round-ups for a week or two, perhaps keeping with it the entire time it is working. On occasions he will have a good deal of spare time on his hands,

which, if he chooses, he can spend in reading or writing. If he cares for books, there will be many a worn volume in the primitive little sitting-room, with its log walls and huge fire-place; but after a hard day's work a man will not read much, but will rock to and fro in the flickering firelight, talking sleepily over his success in the day's chase and the difficulty he has had with the cattle; or else may simply lie stretched at full length on the elk-hides and wolf-skins in front of the hearthstone, listening in drowsy silence to the roar and crackle of the blazing logs and to the moaning of the wind outside.

In the sharp fall weather the riding is delicious all day long; but even in the late spring, and all through the summer, we try, if we can, to do our work before the heat of the day, and if going on a long ride, whether to hunt or for other purposes, leave the ranch house by dawn.

The early rides in the spring mornings have a charm all their own, for they are taken when, for the one and only time during the year, the same brown landscape of these high plains turns to a vivid green, as the new grass sprouts and the trees and bushes thrust forth the young leaves; and at dawn, with the dew glittering everywhere, all things show at their best and freshest. The flowers are out and a man may gallop for



miles at a stretch with his horse's hoofs sinking at every stride into the carpet of prairie roses, whose short stalks lift the beautiful blossoms but a few inches from the ground. Even in the waste places the cactuses are blooming; and one kind in particular, a dwarfish, globular plant, with its mass of splendid crimson flowers glows against the sides of the gray buttes like a splash of flame.

The ravines, winding about and splitting into a labyrinth of coulees, with chains of rounded hills to separate them, have groves of trees in their bottoms, along the sides of the water-courses. In these are found the blacktail deer, and his cousin, the whitetail, too, with his flaunting flag; but in the springtime, when we are after antelope only, we must go out farther to the flat prairie land on the divide. Here, in places, the level, grassy plains are strewn with mounds and hillocks of red or gray scoria, that stand singly or clustered into little groups, their tops crested, or their sides covered, by queer detached masses of volcanic rock, wrought into strange shapes by the dead forces whose blind, hidden strength long ago called them into being. The road our wagons take, when the water is too high for us to come down the river bottoms, stretches far ahead—two dark, straight, parallel

furrows which merge into one in the distance. Quaint little horned frogs crawl sluggishly along in the wheel tracks, and the sickle-billed curlews run over the ground or soar above and around the horsemen, uttering their mournful, never-ceasing clamor. The grassland stretches out in the sunlight like a sea, every wind bending the blades into a ripple, and flecking the prairie with shifting patches of a different green from that around, exactly as the touch of a light squall or wind-gust will fleck the smooth surface of the ocean.

In the spring mornings the rider on the plains will hear bird songs unknown in the East. The Missouri skylark sings while soaring above the great plateaus so high in the air that it is impossible to see the bird; and this habit of singing while soaring it shares with some sparrow-like birds that are often found in company with it. The white-shouldered lark-bunting, in its livery of black, has rich, full notes, and as it sings on the wing it reminds one of the bobolink; and the sweet-voiced lark-finch also utters its song in the air. These birds, and most of the sparrows of the plains, are characteristic of this region.

But many of our birds, especially those found in the wooded river bottoms, answer to those of the East; only almost each one has some marked



point of difference from its Eastern representative. The bluebird out West is very much of a blue bird indeed, for it has no "earth tinge" on its breast at all; while the indigo-bird, on the contrary, has gained the ruddy markings that the other has lost. The flicker has the shafts of its wing and tail quills colored orange instead of yellow. The towhee has lost all title to its name, for its only cry is a mew like that of a cat-bird; while, most wonderful of all, the meadow-lark has found a rich, strong voice, and is one of the sweetest and most incessant singers we have.

Throughout June the thickets and groves about the ranch houses are loud with bird music from before dawn till long after sunrise. The thrashers have sung all the night through from among the thorn-bushes if there has been a moon, or even if there has been bright starlight; and before the first glimmer of gray the bell-like, silvery songs of the shy woodland thrushes chime in; while meadow-lark, robin, bluebird and song sparrow, together with many rarer singers, like the grosbeak, join in swelling the chorus. There are some would-be singers whose intention is better than their execution. Blackbirds of several kinds are plenty round the house and stables, walking about with a knowing air, like so many dwarf crows; and now and then a flock of yel-

low-heads will mix for a few days with their purple or rusty-colored brethren. The males of these yellow-headed grakles are really handsome, their orange and yellow heads contrasting finely with the black of the rest of their plumage; but their voices are discordant to a degree. When a flock has done feeding it will often light in straggling order among the trees in front of the veranda, and then the males will begin to sing, or rather to utter the most extraordinary collection of broken sounds—creakings, gurglings, hisses, twitters, and every now and then a liquid note or two. It is like an accentuated representation of the noise made by a flock of common blackbirds. At nightfall the poor-wills begin to utter their boding call from the wooded ravines back in the hills; not “whip-poor-will,” as in the East, but with two syllables only. They often come round the ranch house. Late one evening I had been sitting motionless on the veranda, looking out across the water and watching the green and brown of the hill-tops change to purple and umber and then fade off into shadowy gray as the somber darkness deepened. Suddenly a poor-will lit on the floor beside me and stayed some little time; now and then uttering its mournful cries, then ceasing for a few moments as it flitted round after insects, and again



A bucking bronco.



returning to the same place to begin anew. The little owls, too, call to each other with tremulous, quavering voices throughout the livelong night, as they sit in the creaking trees that overhang the roof. Now and then we hear the wilder voices of the wilderness, from animals that in the hours of darkness do not fear the neighborhood of man: the coyotes wail like dismal ventriloquists, or the silence may be broken by the strident challenge of a lynx, or by the snorting and stamping of a deer that has come to the edge of the open.

In the hot noontide hours of midsummer the broad ranch veranda, always in the shade, is almost the only spot where a man can be comfortable; but here he can sit for hours at a time, leaning back in his rocking-chair, as he reads or smokes, or with half-closed, dreamy eyes gazes across the shallow, nearly dry river-bed to the wooded bottoms opposite, and to the plateaus lying back of them. Against the sheer white faces of the cliffs, that come down without a break, the dark green tree-tops stand out in bold relief. In the hot, lifeless air all objects that are not nearby seem to sway and waver. There are few sounds to break the stillness. From the upper branches of the cottonwood trees overhead, whose shimmering, tremulous leaves are hardly ever quiet,

but if the wind stirs at all, rustle and quiver and sigh all day long, comes every now and then the soft, melancholy cooing of the mourning dove, whose voice always seems far away and expresses more than any other sound in nature the sadness of gentle, hopeless, never-ending grief. The other birds are still; and very few animals move about. Now and then the black shadow of a wheeling vulture falls on the sun-scorched ground. The cattle, that have strung down in long files from the hills, lie quietly on the sand-bars, except that some of the bulls keep traveling up and down, bellowing and routing or giving vent to long, surly grumblings as they paw the sand and toss it up with their horns. At times the horses, too, will come down to drink, and to splash and roll in the water.

The prairie-dogs alone are not daunted by the heat, but sit at the mouths of their burrows with their usual pert curiosity. They are bothersome little fellows, and most prolific, increasing in spite of the perpetual war made on them by every carnivorous bird and beast. One of their worst foes is the black-footed ferret, a handsome, rather rare animal, somewhat like a mink, with a yellow-brown body and dark feet and mask. It is a most bloodthirsty little brute, feeding on all small animals and ground birds. It will readily



master a jack-rabbit, will kill very young fawns if it finds them in the mother's absence, and works extraordinary havoc in a dog town, as it can follow the wretched little beasts down into the burrows. In one instance, I knew of a black-footed ferret making a succession of inroads on a ranchman's poultry, killing and carrying off most of them before it was trapped. Coyotes, foxes, swifts, badgers and skunks also like to lurk about the dog towns. Of the skunks, by the way, we had last year altogether too much; there was a perfect plague of them all along the river, and they took to trying to get into the huts, with the stupid pertinacity of the species. At every ranch house dozens were killed, we ourselves bagging thirty-three, all slain near the house, and one, to our unspeakable sorrow, in it.

In making a journey over ground we know, during the hot weather we often prefer to ride by moonlight. The moon shines very brightly through the dry, clear night air, turning the gray buttes into glimmering silver; and the horses travel far more readily and easily than under the glaring noonday sun. The road between my upper and lower ranch houses is about forty miles long, sometimes following the river-bed, and then again branching off inland, crossing the great plateaus and winding through the ravines of the

broken country. It is a five-hours' fair ride; and so, in a hot spell, we like to take it during the cool of the night, starting at sunset. After nightfall the face of the country seems to alter marvelously, and the clear moonlight only intensifies the change. The river gleams like running quicksilver, and the moonbeams play over the grassy stretches of the plateaus and glance off the wind-rippled blades as they would from water. The Bad Lands seem to be stranger and wilder than ever, the silvery rays turning the country into a kind of grim fairyland. The grotesque, fantastic outlines of the higher cliffs stand out with startling clearness, while the lower buttes have become formless, misshapen masses, and the deep gorges are in black shadow; in the darkness there will be no sound but the rhythmic echo of the hoof-beats of the horses and the steady, metallic clank of the steel bridle-chains.

But the fall is the time for riding; for in the keen, frosty air neither man nor beast will tire, though out from the dawn until the shadows have again waxed long and the daylight has begun to wane, warning all to push straight for home without drawing rein. Then deer-saddles and elk-haunches hang from the trees near the house; and one can have good sport right on the sand of the river-bed, for we always keep shot-gun



or rifle at hand, to be ready for any prairie chickens, or for such of the passing water-fowl as light in the river near us. Occasionally we take a shot at a flock of waders, among which the pretty avocets are the most striking in looks and manners. Prairie fowl are quite plenty all round us, and occasionally small flocks come fairly down into the yard, or perch among the trees near by. At evening they fly down to the river to drink, and as they sit on the sand-bars offer fine marks for the rifles. So do the geese and ducks when they occasionally light on the same places or paddle leisurely downstream in the middle of the river; but to make much of a bag of these we have to use the heavy No. 10, choke-bore shot-gun, while the little 16-bore fowling-piece is much the handiest for prairie fowl. A good many different kinds of water-fowl pass, ranging in size from a teal duck to a Canada goose, and all of them at times help to eke out our bill of fare. The snow geese and common wild geese are what we usually kill, however.

Sometimes strings of sandbill cranes fly along the river, their guttural clangor being heard very far off. They usually light on a plateau, where sometimes they form rings and go through a series of queer antics, dancing and posturing to

each other. They are exceedingly wide-awake birds, and more shy and wary than antelope, so that they are rarely shot; yet once I succeeded in stalking up to a group in the early morning, and firing into them rather at random, my bullet killed a full-grown female. Its breast, when roasted, proved to be very good eating.

Sometimes we vary our diet with fish—wall-eyed pike, ugly, slimy catfish, and other uncouth finny things, looking very fit denizens of the mud-choked water; but they are good eating withal, in spite of their uncanny appearance. We usually catch them with set lines, left out over-night in the deeper pools.

## THE ROUND-UP

SONOMA

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## THE ROUND-UP

### I. PREPARING FOR THE ROUND-UP

**D**URING the winter-time there is ordinarily but little work done among the cattle.

There is some line riding, and a continual lookout is kept for the very weak animals,—usually cows and calves, who have to be driven in, fed and housed; but most of the stock are left to shift for themselves, undisturbed. Almost every stock-growers' association forbids branding any calves before the spring round-up. If great bands of cattle wander off the range, parties may be fitted out to go after them and bring them back; but this is only done when absolutely necessary, as when the drift of the cattle has been towards an Indian reservation or a settled granger country, for the weather is very severe, and the horses are so poor that their food must be carried along.

The bulk of the work is done during the summer, including the late spring and early fall, and consists mainly in a succession of round-ups, be-

ginning, with us, in May and ending towards the last of October.

But a good deal may be done in the intervals by riding over one's range. Frequently, too, herding will be practised on a large scale.

Still more important is the "trail" work; cattle, while driven from one range to another, or to a shipping point for beef, being said to be "on the trail." For years the over-supply from the vast breeding ranches to the south, especially in Texas, has been driven northward in large herds, either to the shipping towns along the great railroads, or else to the fattening ranges of the Northwest; it having been found, so far, that while the calf crop is larger in the South, beeves become much heavier in the North. Such cattle, for the most part, went along tolerably well-marked routes or trails, which became for the time being of great importance, flourishing—and extremely lawless—towns growing up along them; but with the growth of the railroad system, and above all with the filling up of the northern ranges, these trails have steadily become of less and less consequence, though many herds still travel them on their way to the already crowded ranges of western Dakota and Montana, or to the Canadian regions beyond. The trail work is something by itself. The

herds may be on the trail several months, averaging fifteen miles or less a day. The cowboys accompanying each have to undergo much hard toil, of a peculiarly same and wearisome kind, on account of the extreme slowness with which everything must be done, as trail cattle should never be hurried. The foreman of a trail outfit must be not only a veteran cowhand, but also a miracle of patience and resolution.

Round-up work is far less irksome, there being an immense amount of dash and excitement connected with it; and when once the cattle are on the range, the important work is done during the round-up. On cow ranches, or wherever there is breeding stock, the spring round-up is the great event of the season, as it is then that the bulk of the calves are branded. It usually lasts six weeks or thereabouts; but its end by no means implies rest for the stockman. On the contrary, as soon as it is over, wagons are sent to work out-of-the-way parts of the country that have been passed over, but where cattle are supposed to have drifted; and by the time these have come back the first beef round-up has begun, and thereafter beeves are steadily gathered and shipped, at least from among the larger herds, until cold weather sets in; and in the fall there is another round-up, to brand the late calves and

see that the stock is got back on the range. As all of these round-ups are of one character, a description of the most important, taking place in the spring, will be enough.

In April we begin to get up the horses. Throughout the winter very few have been kept for use, as they are then poor and weak, and must be given grain and hay if they are to be worked. The men in the line camps need two or three apiece, and each man at the home ranch has a couple more; but the rest are left out to shift for themselves, which the tough, hardy little fellows are well able to do. Ponies can pick up a living where cattle die; though the scanty feed, which they may have to uncover by pawing off the snow, and the bitter weather often make them look very gaunt by spring-time. But the first warm rains bring up the green grass, and then all the live-stock gain flesh with wonderful rapidity. When the spring round-up begins the horses should be as fat and sleek as possible. After running all winter free, even the most sober pony is apt to betray an inclination to buck; and, if possible, we like to ride every animal once or twice before we begin to do real work with him.

Animals that have escaped for any length of time are almost as bad to handle as if they had



never been broken. One horse that had been gone for eighteen months has, since his return, been suggestively dubbed "Dynamite Jimmy," on account of the incessant and eruptive energy with which he bucks. Many of our horses, by the way, are thus named from some feat or peculiarity. Wire Fence, when being broken, ran into one of the abominations after which he is now called; Hackamore once got away and remained out for three weeks with a hackamore, or breaking-halter, on him; Macaulay contracted the habit of regularly getting rid of the huge Scotchman to whom he was intrusted; Bulberry Johnny spent the hour or two after he was first mounted in a large patch of thorny bulberry bushes, his distracted rider unable to get him to do anything but move round sidewise in a circle; Fall Back would never get to the front; Water Skip always jumps mud-puddles; and there are a dozen others with names as purely descriptive.

The stock-growers of Montana, of the western part of Dakota, and even of portions of extreme northern Wyoming,—that is, of all the grazing lands lying in the basin of the Upper Missouri,—have united and formed themselves into the great Montana Stock-growers' Association. Among the countless benefits they have derived

from this course, not the least has been the way in which the various round-ups work in with and supplement one another. At the spring meeting of the association, the entire territory mentioned above, including perhaps a hundred thousand square miles, is mapped out into round-up districts, which generally are changed but slightly from year to year, and the times and places for the round-ups to begin refixed so that those of adjacent districts may be run with a view to the best interests of all.

The captain or foreman of the round-up, upon whom very much of its efficiency and success depends, is chosen beforehand. He is, of course, an expert cowman, thoroughly acquainted with the country; and he must also be able to command and keep control of the wild rough-riders he has under him—a feat needing both tact and firmness.

## II. RIDING TO THE ROUND-UP.

At the appointed day all meet at the place from which the round-up is to start. Each ranch, of course, has most work to be done in its own round-up district, but it is also necessary to have representatives in all those surrounding it. A large outfit may employ a dozen cowboys,

or over, in the home district, and yet have nearly as many more representing its interests in the various ones adjoining. Smaller outfits generally club together to run a wagon and send outside representatives, or else go along with their stronger neighbors, they paying part of the expenses. A large outfit, with a herd of twenty thousand cattle or more, can, if necessary, run a round-up entirely by itself, and is able to act independently of outside help; it is therefore at a great advantage compared with those that can take no step effectively without their neighbors' consent and assistance.

If the starting-point is some distance off, it may be necessary to leave home three or four days in advance. Before this we have got everything in readiness; have overhauled the wagons, shod any horse whose forefeet are tender,—as a rule, all our ponies go barefooted,—and left things in order at the ranch. Our outfit may be taken as a sample of every one else's. We have a stout four-horse wagon to carry the bedding and the food; in its rear a mess-chest is rigged to hold the knives, forks, cans, etc. All our four team-horses are strong, willing animals, though of no great size, being originally just "broncos," or unbroken native horses, like the others. The teamster is also cook: a man who is a really first-

rate hand at both driving and cooking—and our present teamster is both—can always command his price. Besides our own men, some cowboys from neighboring ranches and two or three representatives from other round-up districts are always along, and we generally have at least a dozen “riders,” as they are termed,—that is, cowboys, or “cow-punchers,” who do the actual cattle-work,—with the wagon. Each of these has a string of eight or ten ponies; and to take charge of the saddle-band, thus consisting of a hundred odd head, there are two herders, always known as “horse-wranglers”—one for the day and one for the night. Occasionally there will be two wagons, one to carry the bedding and one the food, known, respectively, as the bed and the mess wagon; but this is not usual.

While traveling to the meeting-point the pace is always slow, as it is an object to bring the horses on the ground as fresh as possible. Accordingly we keep at a walk almost all day, and the riders, having nothing else to do, assist the wranglers in driving the saddle-band, three or four going in front, and others on the side, so that the horses shall keep on a walk. There is always some trouble with the animals at the starting out, as they are very fresh and are restive under the saddle. The herd is likely to stam-

pede, and any beast that is frisky or vicious is sure to show its worst side. To do really effective cow-work a pony should be well broken; but many even of the old ones have vicious traits, and almost every man will have in his string one or two young horses, or broncos, hardly broken at all. Thanks to the rough methods of breaking in vogue on the plains many even of the so-called broken animals retain always certain bad habits, the most common being that of bucking. Of the sixty odd horses on my ranch all but half a dozen were broken by ourselves; and though my men are all good riders, yet a good rider is not necessarily a good horse-breaker, and indeed it was an absolute impossibility properly to break so many animals in the short time at our command—for we had to use them almost immediately after they were bought. In consequence, very many of my horses have to this day traits not likely to set a timid or a clumsy rider at his ease. One or two can run away and cannot be held by even the strongest bit; others can hardly be bridled or saddled until they have been thrown; two or three have a tendency to fall over backward; and half of them buck more or less, some so hard that only an expert can sit them; several I never ride myself, save from dire necessity.

In riding these wild, vicious horses, and in ca-

reering over such very bad ground, especially at night, accidents are always occurring. A man who is merely an ordinary rider is certain to have a pretty hard time. On my first round-up I had a string of nine horses, four of them broncos, only broken to the extent of having each been saddled once or twice. One of them it was an impossibility to bridle or to saddle single-handed; it was very difficult to get on or off him, and he was exceedingly nervous if a man moved his hands or feet; but he had no bad tricks. The second soon became perfectly quiet. The third turned out to be one of the worst buckers on the ranch: once, when he bucked me off, I managed to fall on a stone and broke a rib. The fourth had a still worse habit, for he would balk and then throw himself over backward: once, when I was not quick enough, he caught me and broke something in the point of my shoulder, so that it was some weeks before I could raise my arm freely. My hurts were far from serious, and did not interfere with my riding and working as usual through the round-up; but I was heartily glad when it ended, and ever since have religiously done my best to get none but gentle horses in my own string. However, every one gets falls from or with his horse now and then in the cow country; and even my men, good riders



Although they are, are sometimes injured. One of them once broke his ankle; another a rib; another was on one occasion stunned, remaining unconscious for some hours; and yet another had certain of his horses buck under him so hard and long as finally to hurt his lungs and make him cough blood. Fatal accidents occur annually in almost every district, especially if there is much work to be done among stampeded cattle at night; but on my own ranch none of my men have ever been seriously hurt, though on one occasion a cowboy from another ranch, who was with my wagon, was killed, his horse falling and pitching him heavily on his head.

For bedding, each man has two or three pairs of blankets, and a tarpaulin or small wagon-sheet. Usually, two or three sleep together. Even in June the nights are generally cool and pleasant, and it is chilly in the early mornings; although this is not always so, and when the weather stays hot and mosquitoes are plenty, the hours of darkness, even in midsummer, seem painfully long. In the Bad Lands proper we are not often bothered very seriously by these winged pests; but in the low bottoms of the Big Missouri, and beside many of the reedy ponds and great sloughs out on the prairie, they are a perfect scourge. During the very hot nights,

when they are especially active, the bed-clothes make a man feel absolutely smothered, and yet his only chance for sleep is to wrap himself tightly up, head and all; and even then some of the pests will usually force their way in. At sunset I have seen the mosquitoes rise up from the land like a dense cloud, to make the hot, stifling night one long torture; the horses would neither lie down nor graze, traveling restlessly to and fro till daybreak, their bodies streaked and bloody, and the insects settling on them so as to make them all one color, a uniform gray; while the men, after a few hours' tossing about in the vain attempt to sleep, rose, built a little fire of damp sage brush, and thus endured the misery as best they could until it was light enough to work.

But if the weather is fine, a man will never sleep better nor more pleasantly than in the open air after a hard day's work on the round-up; nor will an ordinary shower or gust of wind disturb him in the least, for he simply draws the tarpaulin over his head and goes on sleeping. But now and then we have a wind-storm that might better be called a whirl-wind and has to be met very differently; and two or three days or nights of rain insure the wetting of the blankets, and therefore shivering discomfort on



the part of the would-be sleeper. For two or three hours all goes well; and it is rather soothing to listen to the steady patter of the great rain-drops on the canvas. But then it will be found that a corner has been left open through which the water can get in, or else the tarpaulin will begin to leak somewhere; or perhaps the water will have collected in a hollow underneath and have begun to soak through. Soon a little stream trickles in, and every effort to remedy matters merely results in a change for the worse. To move out of the way insures getting wet in a fresh spot; and the best course is to lie still and accept the evils that have come with what fortitude one can. Even thus, the first night a man can sleep pretty well; but if the rain continues, the second night, when the blankets are already damp, and when the water comes through more easily, is apt to be most unpleasant.

Of course, a man can take little spare clothing on a round-up; at the very outside two or three clean handkerchiefs, a pair of socks, a change of underclothes, and the most primitive kind of washing-apparatus, all wrapped up in a stout jacket which is to be worn when night-herding. The inevitable "slicker," or oil-skin coat, which gives complete protection from the wet, is always carried behind the saddle.

## III. THE ENCAMPMENT.

At the meeting-place there is usually a delay of a day or two to let every one come in; and the plain on which the encampment is made becomes a scene of great bustle and turmoil. The heavy four-horse wagons jolt in from different quarters, the horse-wranglers rushing madly to and fro in the endeavor to keep the different saddle-bands from mingling, while the "riders," or cowboys, with each wagon jog along in a body. The representatives from outside districts ride in singly or by twos and threes, every man driving before him his own horses, one of them loaded with his bedding. Each wagon wheels out of the way into some camping-place not too near the others, the bedding is tossed out on the ground, and then every one is left to do what he wishes, while the different wagon bosses, or foremen, seek out the captain of the round-up to learn what his plans are.

There is a good deal of rough but effective discipline and method in the way in which a round-up is carried on. The captain of the whole has as lieutenants the various wagon foremen, and in making demands for men to do some special service he will usually merely designate some foreman to take charge of the work and

let him parcel it out among his men to suit himself. The captain of the round-up or the foreman of a wagon may himself be a ranchman; if such is not the case, and the ranchman nevertheless comes along, he works and fares precisely as do the other cowboys.

While the head men are gathered in a little knot, planning out the work, the others are dispersed over the plain in every direction, racing, breaking rough horses, or simply larking with one another. If a man has an especially bad horse, he usually takes such an opportunity, when he has plenty of time, to ride him; and while saddling he is surrounded by a crowd of most unsympathetic associates who greet with uproarious mirth any misadventure. A man on a bucking horse is always considered fair game, every squeal and jump of the bronco being hailed with cheers of delighted irony for the rider and shouts to "stay with him." The antics of a vicious bronco show infinite variety of detail, but are all modeled on one general plan. When the rope settles round his neck the fight begins, and it is only after much plunging and snorting that a twist is taken over his nose, or else a hackamore—a species of severe halter, usually made of plaited hair—slipped on his head. While being bridled he strikes viciously with his fore feet, and

perhaps has to be blindfolded or thrown down; and to get the saddle on him is quite as difficult. When saddled, he may get rid of his exuberant spirits by bucking under the saddle, or may reserve all his energies for the rider. In the last case, the man keeping tight hold with his left hand of the cheek-strap, so as to prevent the horse from getting his head down until he is fairly seated, swings himself quickly into the saddle. Up rises the bronco's back into an arch; his head, the ears laid straight back, goes down between his forefeet, and, squealing savagely, he makes a succession of rapid, stiff-legged, jarring bounds. Sometimes he is a "plunging" buckner, who runs forward all the time while bucking; or he may buck steadily in one place, or "sun-fish"—that is, bring first one shoulder down almost to the ground and then the other,—or else he may change ends while in the air. A first-class rider will sit throughout it all without moving from the saddle, quirting<sup>1</sup> his horse all the time, though his hat may be jarred off his head and his revolver out of its sheath. After a few jumps, however, the average man grasps hold of the horn of the saddle—the delighted on-lookers meanwhile earnestly advising him not to

<sup>1</sup> Quirt is the name of the short flexible riding-whip used throughout cowboy land. The term is a Spanish one.

"go to leather"—and is contented to get through the affair in any shape provided he can escape without being thrown off. An accident is of necessity borne with a broad grin, as any attempt to resent the raillery of the bystanders—which is perfectly good-humored—would be apt to result disastrously.

On such a day, when there is no regular work, there will often also be horse-races, as each outfit is pretty sure to have some running pony which it believes can outpace any other. These contests are always short-distance dashes, for but a few hundred yards. Horse-racing is a mania with most plainsmen, white or red. A man with a good racing pony will travel all about with it, often winning large sums, visiting alike cow ranches, frontier towns and Indian encampments. Sometimes the race is "pony against pony," the victor taking both steeds. In racing the men ride bareback, as there are hardly any light saddles in the cow country. There will be intense excitement and very heavy betting over a race between two well-known horses, together with a good chance of blood being shed in the attendant quarrels. Indians and whites often race against each other as well as among themselves. I have seen several such contests, and in every case but one the white man happened to win. A race is

usually run between two thick rows of spectators, on foot and on horseback, and as the racers pass, these rows close in behind them, every man yelling and shouting with all the strength of his lungs, and all waving their hats and cloaks to encourage the contestants, or firing off their revolvers and saddle guns. The little horses are fairly maddened, as is natural enough, and run as if they were crazy: were the distances longer some would be sure to drop in their tracks.

Besides the horse-races, which are, of course, the main attraction, the men at a round-up will often get up wrestling matches or foot-races. In fact, every one feels that he is off for a holiday; for after the monotony of a long winter the cowboys look forward eagerly to the round-up, where the work is hard, it is true, but exciting and varied, and treated a good deal as a frolic. There is no eight-hour law in cowboy land: during round-up time we often count ourselves lucky if we get off with much less than sixteen hours; but the work is done in the saddle, and the men are spurred on all the time by the desire to outdo one another in feats of daring and skillful horsemanship. There is very little quarreling or fighting; and though the fun often takes the form of rather rough horse-play, yet the practice of carrying dangerous weapons



makes cowboys show far more rough courtesy to each other and far less rudeness to strangers than is the case among, for instance, Eastern miners, or even lumbermen. When a quarrel may very probably result fatally a man thinks twice before going into it: warlike people or classes always treat one another with a certain amount of consideration and politeness. The moral tone of a cow-camp, indeed, is rather high than otherwise. Meanness, cowardice and dishonesty are not tolerated. There is a high regard for truthfulness and keeping one's word, intense contempt for any kind of hypocrisy, and a hearty dislike for a man who shirks his work.

#### IV. THE WORK OF ROUNDING-UP.

The method of work is simple. The mess-wagons and loose horses, after breaking camp in the morning, move on in a straight line for some few miles, going into camp again before midday; and the day herd, consisting of all the cattle that have been found far off their range, and which are to be brought back there, and of any others that it is necessary to gather, follows on afterwards. Meanwhile the cowboys scatter out and drive in all the cattle from the country round about, going perhaps ten or fifteen miles back

from the line of march, and meeting at the place where camp has already been pitched. The wagons always keep some little distance from one another, and the saddle-bands do the same, so that the horses may not get mixed. It is rather picturesque to see the four-horse teams filing down at a trot through a pass among the buttes—the saddle-bands being driven along at a smart pace to one side or behind, the teamsters cracking their whips and the horse-wranglers calling and shouting as they ride rapidly from side to side behind the horses, urging on the stragglers by dexterous touches with the knotted ends of their long lariats that are left trailing from the saddle. The country driven over is very rough and it is often necessary to double up teams and put on eight horses to each wagon in going up an unusually steep pitch or hauling through a deep mud-hole or over a river crossing where there is quicksand.

The speed and thoroughness with which a country can be worked depends, of course, very largely upon the number of riders. Ours is probably about an average round-up as regards size. The last spring I was out there were half a dozen wagons along; the saddle-bands numbered about a hundred each; and the morning we started, sixty men in the saddle splashed across



the shallow ford of the river that divided the plain where we had camped from the valley of the long winding creek up which we were first to work.

In the morning the cook is preparing breakfast long before the first glimmer of dawn. As soon as it is ready, probably about 3 o'clock, he utters a long-drawn shout, and all the sleepers feel it is time to be up on the instant, for they know there can be no such thing as delay on the round-up, under penalty of being set afoot. Accordingly, they bundle out, rubbing their eyes and yawning, draw on their boots and trousers,—if they have taken the latter off,—roll up and cord their bedding, and usually without any attempt at washing crowd over to the little smoldering fire, which is placed in a hole dug in the ground, so that there may be no risk of its spreading. The men are rarely very hungry at breakfast, and it is a meal that has to be eaten in shortest order, so it is perhaps the least important. Each man, as he comes up, grasps a tin cup and plate from the mess-box, pours out his tea or coffee, with sugar, but, of course, no milk, helps himself to one or two of the biscuits that have been baked in a Dutch oven, and perhaps also to a slice of the fat pork swimming in the grease of the frying-pan, ladles himself out some beans, if there are

any, and squats down on the ground to eat his breakfast. The meal is not an elaborate one; nevertheless a man will have to hurry if he wishes to eat it before hearing the foreman sing out, "Come, boys, catch your horses"; when he must drop everything and run out to the wagon with his lariat. The night wrangler is now bringing in the saddle-band, which he has been up all night guarding. A rope corral is rigged up by stretching a rope from each wheel of one side of the wagon, making a V-shaped space, into which the saddle-horses are driven. Certain men stand around to keep them inside, while the others catch the horses: many outfits have one man to do all the roping. As soon as each has caught his horse—usually a strong, tough animal, the small, quick ponies being reserved for the work round the herd in the afternoon—the band, now in charge of the day wrangler, is turned loose, and every one saddles up as fast as possible. It still lacks some time of being sunrise, and the air has in it the peculiar chill of the early morning. When all are saddled, many of the horses bucking and dancing about, the riders from the different wagons all assemble at the one where the captain is sitting, already mounted. He waits a very short time—for laggards receive but scant mercy—before announcing the proposed camp-

ing-place and parceling out the work among those present. If, as is usually the case, the line of march is along a river or creek, he appoints some man to take a dozen others and drive down (or up) it ahead of the day herd, so that the latter will not have to travel through other cattle; the day herd itself being driven and guarded by a dozen men detached for that purpose. The rest of the riders are divided into two bands, placed under men who know the country, and start out, one on each side, to bring in every head for fifteen miles back. The captain then himself rides down to the new camping-place, so as to be there as soon as any cattle are brought in.

Meanwhile the two bands, a score of riders in each, separate and make their way in opposite directions. The leader of each tries to get such a "scatter" on his men that they will cover completely all the land gone over. This morning work is called circle riding, and is peculiarly hard in the Bad Lands on account of the remarkably broken, rugged nature of the country. The men come in on lines that tend to a common center—as if the sticks of a fan were curved. As the band goes out, the leader from time to time detaches one or two men to ride down through certain sections of the country, making the shorter, or what are called inside, circles, while he

keeps on; and finally, retaining as companions the two or three whose horses are toughest, makes the longest or outside circle himself, going clear back to the divide, or whatever the point may be that marks the limit of the round-up work, and then turning and working straight to the meeting-place. Each man, of course, brings in every head of cattle he can see.

These long, swift rides in the glorious spring mornings are not soon to be forgotten. The sweet, fresh air, with a touch of sharpness thus early in the day, and the rapid motion of the fiery little horse combine to make a man's blood thrill and leap with sheer buoyant light-heartedness and eager, exultant pleasure in the boldness and freedom of the life he is leading. As we climb the steep sides of the first range of buttes, wisps of wavering mist still cling in the hollows of the valley; when we come out on the top of the first great plateau the sun flames up over its edge, and in the level, red beams the galloping horsemen throw long fantastic shadows. Black care rarely sits behind a rider whose pace is fast enough; at any rate, not when he first feels the horse move under him.

Sometimes we trot or pace, and again we lope or gallop; the few who are to take the outside circle must needs ride both hard and fast. Al-

though only grass-fed, the horses are tough and wiry; and, moreover, are each used but once in four days, or thereabouts, so they stand the work well. The course out lies across great grassy plateaus, along knifelike ridge crests, among winding valleys and ravines, and over acres of barren, sun-scorched buttes, that look grimly grotesque and forbidding, while in the Bad Lands the riders unhesitatingly go down and over places where it seems impossible that a horse should even stand. The line of horsemen will quarter down the side of a butte, where every pony has to drop from ledge to ledge like a goat, and will go over the shoulder of a soapstone cliff, when wet and slippery, with a series of plunges and scrambles which if unsuccessful would land horses and riders in the bottom of the cañon-like washout below. In descending a clay butte after a rain, the pony will put all four feet together and slide down to the bottom almost or quite on his haunches. In very wet weather the Bad Lands are absolutely impassable; but if the ground is not slippery, it is a remarkable place that can shake the matter-of-course confidence felt by the rider in the capacity of his steed to go anywhere.

When the men on the outside circle have reached the bound set them,—whether it is a low

divide, a group of jagged hills, the edge of the rolling, limitless prairie, or the long, waste reaches of alkali and sage brush,—they turn their horses' heads and begin to work down the branches of the creeks, one or two riding down the bottom, while the others keep off to the right and the left, a little ahead and fairly high up on the side hills, so as to command as much of a view as possible. On the level or rolling prairies the cattle can be seen a long way off, and it is an easy matter to gather and to drive them; but in the Bad Lands every little pocket, basin and coulee has to be searched, every gorge or ravine entered and the dense patches of brushwood and spindling, wind-beaten trees closely examined. All the cattle are carried on ahead down the creek; and it is curious to watch the different behavior of the different breeds. A cowboy riding off to one side of the creek, and seeing a number of long-horned Texans grazing in the branches of a set of coulées, has merely to ride across the upper ends of these, uttering the drawn-out "ei-koh-h-h," so familiar to the cattle-men, and the long-horns will stop grazing, stare fixedly at him, and then, wheeling, strike off down the coulées at a trot, tails in air, to be carried along by the center riders when they reach the main creek into which the coulees lead. Our own range cattle



are not so wild, but nevertheless are easy to drive; while Eastern-raised beasts have little fear of a horseman and merely stare stupidly at him until he rides directly towards them. Every little bunch of stock is thus collected and all are driven along together. At the place where some large fork joins the main creek another band may be met, driven by some of the men who have left earlier in the day to take one of the shorter circles; and thus, before coming down to the bottom where the wagons are camped and where the actual "round-up" itself is to take place, this one herd may include a couple of thousand head; or, on the other hand, the longest ride may not result in the finding of a dozen animals. As soon as the riders are in, they disperse to their respective wagons to get dinner and change horses, leaving the cattle to be held by one or two of their number. If only a small number of cattle have been gathered, they will all be run into one herd; if there are many of them, however, the different herds will be held separate.

A plain where a round-up is taking place offers a picturesque sight. I well remember one such. It was on a level bottom in a bend of the river, which here made an almost semicircular sweep. The bottom was in shape of a long oval, hemmed in by an unbroken line of steep bluffs so that

it looked like an amphitheater. Across the faces of the dazzling white cliffs there were sharp bands of black and red, drawn by the coal seams and the layers of burned clay: the leaves of the trees and the grass had the vivid green of spring-time. The wagons were camped among the cottonwood trees fringing the river, a thin column of smoke rising up from beside each. The horses were grazing round the outskirts, those of each wagon by themselves and kept from going too near the others by their watchful guard. In the great circular corral, towards one end, the men were already branding calves, while the whole middle of the bottom was covered with lowing herds of cattle and shouting, galloping cowboys. Apparently there was nothing but dust, noise and confusion; but in reality the work was proceeding all the while with the utmost rapidity and certainty.

As soon as, or even before, the last circle riders have come in and have snatched a few hasty mouthfuls to serve as their midday meal, we begin to work the herd—or herds, if the one herd would be of too unwieldy size. The animals are held in a compact bunch, most of the riders forming a ring outside, while a couple from each ranch successively look the herds through and cut out those marked with their own brand. It is



difficult, in such a mass of moving beasts,—for they do not stay still, but keep weaving in and out among each other,—to find all of one's own animals: a man must have natural gifts, as well as great experience, before he becomes a good brand-reader and is able really to “clean up a herd”—that is, be sure he has left nothing of his own in it.

To do good work in cutting out from a herd, not only should the rider be a good horseman, but he should also have a skillful, thoroughly trained horse. A good cutting pony is not common and is generally too valuable to be used anywhere but in the herd. Such an one enters thoroughly into the spirit of the thing and finds out immediately the animal his master is after; he will then follow it closely of his own accord through every wheel and double at top speed. When looking through the herd it is necessary to move slowly; and when any animal is found it is taken to the outskirts at a walk, so as not to alarm the others. Once at the outside, however, the cowboy has to ride like lightning; for as soon as the beast he is after finds itself separated from its companions it endeavors to break back among them, and a young, range-raised steer or heifer runs like a deer. In cutting out a cow and a calf two men have to work together. As the animals

of a brand are cut out they are received and held apart by some rider detailed for the purpose, who is said to be "holding the cut."

All this time the men holding the herd have their hands full, for some animal is continually trying to break out, when the nearest man flies at it at once and after a smart chase brings it back to its fellows. As soon as all the cows, calves and whatever else is being gathered have been cut out, the rest are driven clear off the ground and turned loose, being headed in the direction contrary to that in which we travel the following day. Then the riders surround the next herd, the men holding cuts move them up near it and the work is begun anew.

If it is necessary to throw an animal, either to examine a brand or for any other reason, half a dozen men will have their ropes down at once; and then it is spur and quirt in the rivalry to see which can outdo the other until the beast is roped and thrown. A first-class hand will, unaided, rope, throw and tie down a cow or steer in wonderfully short time; one of the favorite tests of competitive skill among the cowboys is the speed with which this feat can be accomplished. Usually, however, one man ropes the animal by the head and another at the same time gets the loop of his lariat over one or both its hind legs, when

it is twisted over and stretched out in a second. In following an animal on horseback the man keeps steadily swinging the rope round his head, by a dexterous motion of the wrist only, until he gets a chance to throw it; when on foot, especially if catching horses in a corral, the loop is allowed to drag loosely on the ground. A good roper will hurl out the coil with marvelous accuracy and force; it fairly whistles through the air, and settles round the object with almost infallible certainty. Mexicans make the best ropers; but some Texans are very little behind them. A good horse takes as much interest in the work as does his rider, and the instant the noose settles over the victim wheels and braces himself to meet the shock, standing with his legs firmly planted, the steer or cow being thrown with a jerk. An unskillful rider and untrained horse will often themselves be thrown when the strain comes.

Sometimes an animal—usually a cow or steer, but, strangely enough, very rarely a bull—will get fighting mad and turn on the men. If on the drive, such a beast usually is simply dropped out; but if they have time nothing delights the cowboys more than an encounter of this sort, and the charging brute is roped and tied down in short order. Often such an one will make a very vicious fight and is most dangerous. Once

a fighting cow kept several of us busy for nearly an hour; she gored two ponies, one of them, which was, luckily, hurt but slightly, being my own pet cutting horse. If a steer is hauled out of a mud-hole its first act is usually to charge the rescuer.

#### V. BRANDING AND HERDING.

As soon as all the brands of cattle are worked and the animals that are to be driven along have been put in the day herd, attention is turned to the cows and calves, which are already gathered in different bands, consisting each of all the cows of a certain brand and all the calves that are following them. If there is a corral, each band is in turn driven into it; if there is none, a ring of riders does duty in its place. A fire is built, the irons heated and a dozen men dismount to, as it is called, "wrestle" the calves. The best two ropers go in on their horses to catch the latter; one man keeps tally, a couple put on the brands and the others seize, throw and hold the little unfortunates. A first-class roper invariably catches the calf by both hind feet, and then, having taken a twist with his lariat round the horn of the saddle, drags the bawling little creature, extended at full-length, up to the fire, where it is



## Branding a horse.



held before it can make a struggle. A less skillful roper catches round the neck, and then, if the calf is a large one, the man who seizes it has his hands full, as the bleating, bucking animal develops astonishing strength, cuts the wildest capers and resists frantically and with all its power. If there are seventy or eighty calves in a corral the scene is one of the greatest confusion. The ropers, spurring and checking the fierce little horses, drag the calves up so quickly that a dozen men can hardly hold them; the men with the irons, blackened with soot, run to and fro; the calf-wrestlers, grimy with blood, dust and sweat, work like beavers; while with the voice of a stentor the tally-man shouts out the number and sex of each calf. The dust rises in clouds, and the shouts, cheers, curses and laughter of the men unite with the lowing of the cows and the frantic bleating of the roped calves to make a perfect babel. Now and then an old cow turns vicious and puts every one out of the corral. Or a *maverick* bull,—that is, an unbranded bull,—a yearling or a two-year-old, is caught, thrown and branded; when he is let up there is sure to be a fine scatter. Down goes his head and he bolts at the nearest man, who makes out of the way at top speed, amidst roars of laughter from all of his companions; while the men holding



down calves swear savagely as they dodge charging mavericks, trampling horses and taut lariats with frantic, plunging little beasts at the farther ends.

Every morning certain riders are detached to drive and to guard the day herd, which is most monotonous work, the men being on from 4 in the morning till 8 in the evening, the only rest coming at dinner-time, when they change horses. When the herd has reached the camping-ground there is nothing to do but to loll listlessly over the saddle-bow in the blazing sun watching the cattle feed and sleep, and seeing that they do not spread out too much. Plodding slowly along on the trail through the columns of dust stirred up by the hoofs is not much better. Cattle travel best and fastest strung out in long lines; the swiftest taking the lead in single file, while the weak and the lazy, the young calves and the poor cows, crowd together in the rear. Two men travel along with the leaders, one on each side, to point them in the right direction; one or two others keep by the flanks, and the rest are in the rear to act as "drag-drivers" and hurry up the phalanx of reluctant weaklings. If the foremost of the string travels too fast, one rider will go along on the trail a few rods ahead and thus

keep them back so that those in the rear will not be left behind.

Generally all this is very tame and irksome; but by fits and starts there will be little flurries of excitement. Two or three of the circle riders may unexpectedly come over a butte near by with a bunch of cattle, which at once start for the day herd, and then there will be a few minutes' furious riding hither and thither to keep them out. Or the cattle may begin to run and then get "milling"—that is, all crowd together into a mass like a ball, wherein they move round and round, trying to keep their heads towards the center and refusing to leave it. The only way to start them is to force one's horse in among them and cut out some of their number, which then begin to travel off by themselves, when the others will probably follow. But in spite of occasional incidents of this kind, day-herding has a dreary sameness about it that makes the men dislike and seek to avoid it.

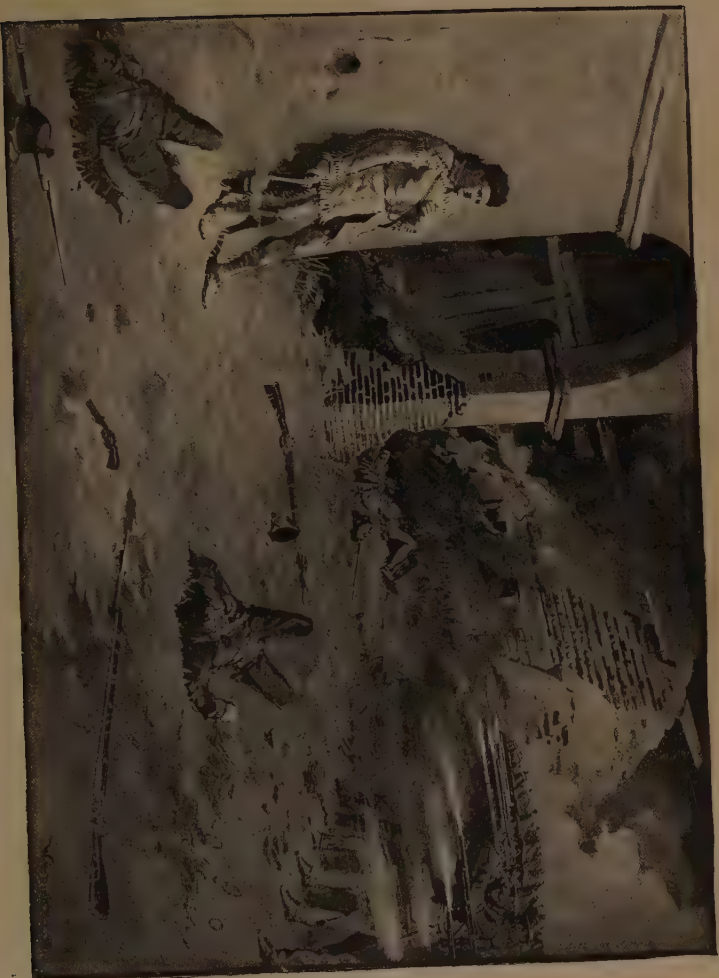
From 8 in the evening till 4 in the morning the day herd becomes a night herd. Each wagon in succession undertakes to guard it for a night, dividing the time into watches of two hours apiece, a couple of riders taking each watch. This is generally chilly and tedious; but at times

it is accompanied by intense excitement and danger, when the cattle become stampeded, whether by storm or otherwise. The first and the last watches are those chosen by preference; the others are disagreeable, the men having to turn out cold and sleepy, in the pitchy darkness, the two hours of chilly wakefulness completely breaking the night's rest. The first guards have to bed the cattle down, though the day-herders often do this themselves: it simply consists in hemming them into as small a space as possible and then riding round them until they lie down and fall asleep. Often, especially at first, this takes some time—the beasts will keep rising and lying down again. When at last most become quiet, some perverse brute of a steer will deliberately hook them all up; they keep moving in and out among one another and long strings of animals suddenly start out from the herd at a stretching walk and are turned back by the nearest cowboy, only to break forth at a new spot. When finally they have lain down and are chewing their cud or slumbering, the two night guards begin riding round them in opposite ways, often, on very dark nights, calling or singing to them, as the sound of the human voice on such occasions seems to have a tendency to quiet them. In inky black weather, especially when rainy, it is both difficult and un-

pleasant work; the main trust must be placed in the horse, which, if old at the business, will of its own accord keep pacing steadily round the herd and head off any animals that, unseen by the rider's eyes in the darkness, are trying to break out. Usually the watch passes off without incident, but on rare occasions the cattle become restless and prone to stampede. Anything may then start them—the plunge of a horse, the sudden approach of a coyote or the arrival of some outside steers or cows that have smelt them and come up. Every animal in the herd will be on its feet in an instant, as if by an electric shock, and off with a rush, horns and tail up. Then, no matter how rough the ground nor how pitchy black the night, the cowboys must ride for all there is in them and spare neither their own nor their horses' necks. Perhaps their charges break away and are lost altogether; perhaps, by desperate galloping, they may head them off, get them running in a circle and finally stop them. Once stopped, they may break again and possibly divide up, one cowboy, perhaps, following each band. I have known six such stops and renewed stampedes to take place in one night, the cowboy staying with his ever-diminishing herd of steers until daybreak, when he managed to get them under control again, and, by careful humoring

of his jaded, staggering horse, finally brought those that were left back to the camp, several miles distant. The riding in these night stampedes is wild and dangerous to a degree, especially if the man gets caught in the rush of the beasts. It also frequently necessitates an immense amount of work in collecting the scattered animals. On one such occasion a small party of us were thirty-six hours in the saddle, dismounting only to change horses or to eat. We were almost worn out at the end of the time; but it must be kept in mind that for a long spell of such work a stock-saddle is far less tiring than the ordinary Eastern or English one, and in every way superior to it.

By very hard riding such a stampede may sometimes be prevented. Once we were bringing a thousand head of young cattle down to my lower ranch, and as the river was high were obliged to take the inland trail. The third night we were forced to make a dry camp, the cattle having had no water since the morning. Nevertheless, we got them bedded down without difficulty, and one of the cowboys and myself stood first guard. But very soon after nightfall, when the darkness had become complete, the thirsty brutes of one accord got on their feet and tried to break out. The only salvation was to



Death of Crockett.





keep them close together, as, if they once got scattered, we knew they could never be gathered; so I kept on one side and the cowboy on the other, and never in my life did I ride so hard. In the darkness I could but dimly see the shadowy outlines of the herd, as with whip and spurs I ran the pony along its edge, turning back the beasts at one point barely in time to wheel and keep them in at another. The ground was cut up by numerous little gullies, and each of us got several falls, horses and riders turning complete somersaults. We were dripping with sweat and our ponies quivering and trembling like quaking aspens, when, after more than an hour of the most violent exertion, we finally got the herd quieted again.

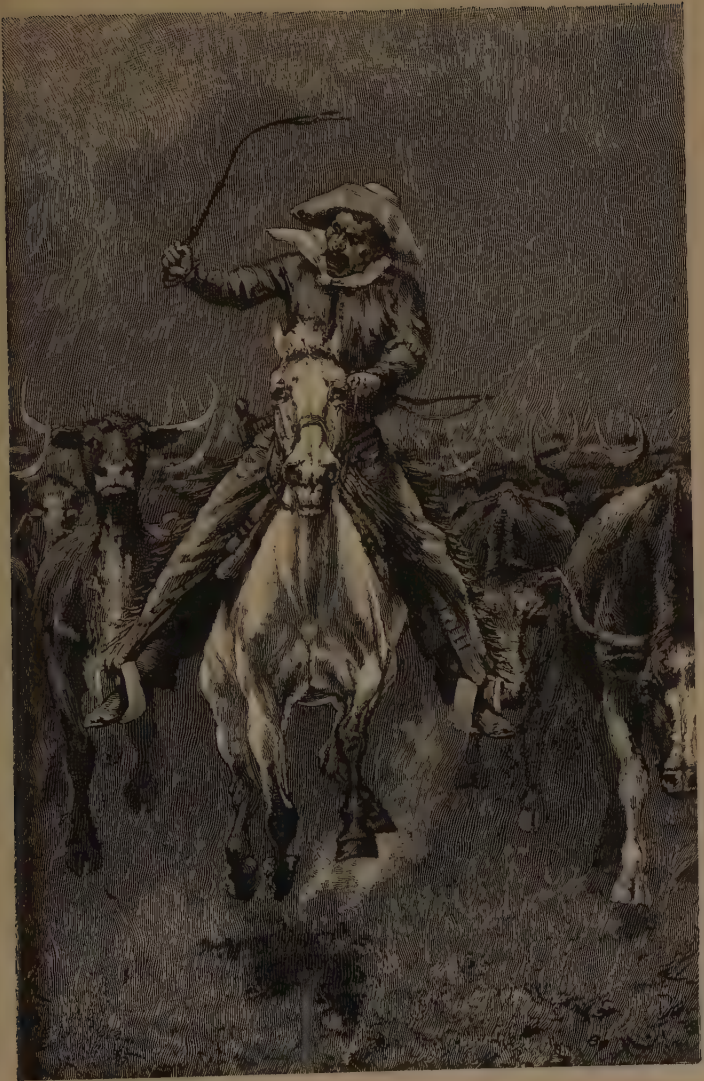
On another occasion while with the round-up we were spared an excessively unpleasant night only because there happened to be two or three great corrals not more than a mile or so away. All day long it had been raining heavily and we were well drenched; but towards evening it lulled a little and the day herd, a very large one, of some two thousand head, was gathered on an open bottom. We had turned the horses loose, and in our oilskin slickers cowered, soaked and comfortless, under the lee of the wagon, to take a meal of damp bread and lukewarm tea, the siz-

zling embers of the fire having about given up the ghost after a quite fruitless struggle with the steady downpour. Suddenly the wind began to come in quick, sharp gusts, and soon a regular blizzard was blowing, driving the rain in stinging level sheets before it. Just as we were preparing to turn into bed, with the certainty of a night of more or less chilly misery ahead of us, one of my men, an iron-faced personage, whom no one would ever have dreamed had a weakness for poetry, looked towards the plain where the cattle were, and remarked, "I guess there's 'racing and chasing on Cannobie Lea' now, sure." Following his gaze, I saw that the cattle had begun to drift before the storm, the night guards being evidently unable to cope with them, while at the other wagons riders were saddling in hot haste and spurring off to their help through the blinding rain. Some of us at once ran out to our own saddleband. All of the ponies were standing huddled together, with their heads down and their tails to the wind. They were wild and restive enough usually; but the storm had cowed them, and we were able to catch them without either rope or halter. We made quick work of saddling; and the second each man was ready, away he loped through the dusk, splashing and slipping in the

pools of water that studded the muddy plain. Most of the riders were already out when we arrived. The cattle were gathered in a compact, wedge-shaped, or rather fan-shaped mass, with their tails to the wind—that is, towards the thin end of the wedge or fan. In front of this fan-shaped mass of frightened, maddened beasts was a long line of cowboys, each muffled in his slicker and with his broad hat pulled down over his eyes, to shield him from the pelting rain. When the cattle were quiet for a moment every horseman at once turned round with his back to the wind, and the whole line stood as motionless as so many sentries. Then, if the cattle began to spread out and overlap at the ends, or made a rush and broke through at one part of the lines, there would be a change into wild activity. The men, shouting and swaying in their saddles, darted to and fro with reckless speed, utterly heedless of danger—now racing to the threatened point, now checking and wheeling their horses so sharply as to bring them square on their haunches, or even throw them flat down, while the hoofs plowed furrows in the slippery soil, until, after some minutes of mad galloping hither and thither, the herd, having drifted a hundred yards or so, would be once more brought up standing. We always had to let them drift a little to pre-

vent their spreading out too much. The din of the thunder was terrific, peal following peal until they mingled in one continuous, rumbling roar; and at every thunder-clap louder than its fellows the cattle would try to break away. Darkness had set in, but each flash of lightning showed us a dense array of tossing horns and staring eyes. It grew always harder to hold in the herd; but the drift took us along to the corrals already spoken of, whose entrances were luckily to windward. As soon as we reached the first we cut off part of the herd, and turned it within; and after again doing this with the second, we were able to put all the remaining animals into the third. The instant the cattle were housed five-sixths of the horsemen started back at full speed for the wagons; the rest of us barely waited to put up the bars and make the corrals secure before galloping after them. We had to ride right in the teeth of the driving storm; and once at the wagons we made small delay in crawling under our blankets, damp though the latter were, for we were ourselves far too wet, stiff and cold not to hail with grateful welcome any kind of shelter from the wind and the rain.

All animals were benumbed by the violence of this gale of cold rain; a prairie chicken rose from under my horse's feet so heavily that, thought-



In a stampede.





lessly striking at it, I cut it down with my whip; while when a jack rabbit got up ahead of us, it was barely able to limp clumsily out of our way.

But though there is much work and hardship, rough fare, monotony and exposure connected with the round-up, yet there are few men who do not look forward to it and back to it with pleasure. The only fault to be found is that the hours of work are so long that one does not usually have enough time to sleep. The food, if rough, is good; beef, bread, pork, beans, coffee or tea, always canned tomatoes, and often rice, canned corn, or sauce made from dried apples. The men are good-humored, bold and thoroughly interested in their business, continually vying with one another in the effort to see which can do the work best. It is superbly health-giving, and is full of excitement and adventure, calling for the exhibition of pluck, self-reliance, hardihood, and dashing horsemanship; and of all forms of physical labor the easiest and pleasantest is to sit in the saddle.





RED AND WHITE ON THE BORDER



## RED AND WHITE ON THE BORDER

UP to 1880 the country through which the Little Missouri flows remained as wild and almost as unknown as it was when the old explorers and fur traders crossed it in the early part of the century. It was the last great Indian hunting-ground, across which Grosventres and Mandans, Sioux and Cheyennes, and even Crows and Rees wandered in chase of game, and where they fought one another and plundered the small parties of white trappers and hunters that occasionally ventured into it. Once or twice generals like Sully and Custer had penetrated it in the course of the long, tedious and bloody campaigns that finally broke the strength of the northern Horse Indians; indeed, the trail made by Custer's baggage train is to this day one of the well-known landmarks, for the deep ruts worn by the wheels of the heavy wagons are in many places still as distinctly to be seen as ever.

In 1883, a regular long-range skirmish took place just south of us between some Cheyennes

and some cowboys, with bloodshed on both sides, while about the same time a band of Sioux plundered a party of buffalo hunters of everything they owned, and some Crows who attempted the same feat with another party were driven off with the loss of two of their number. Since then there have been in our neighborhood no stand-up fights or regular raids; but the Indians have at different times proved more or less troublesome, burning the grass and occasionally killing stock or carrying off horses that have wandered some distance away. They have also themselves suffered somewhat at the hands of white horse-thieves.

Bands of them, accompanied by their squaws and children, often come into the ranch country, either to trade or to hunt, and are then, of course, perfectly meek and peaceable. If they stay any time they build themselves quite comfortable tepees (wigwams, as they would be styled in the East), and an Indian camp is a rather interesting, though very dirty, place to visit. On our ranch we get along particularly well with them, as it is a rule that they shall be treated as fairly as if they were whites; we neither wrong them ourselves nor allow others to wrong them. We have always, for example, been as keen in putting down horse-stealing from Indians as from

whites—which indicates rather an advanced stage of frontier morality, as theft from the “redskins” or the “Government” is usually held to be a very trivial matter compared with the heinous crime of theft from “citizens.”

There is always danger in meeting a band of young bucks in lonely, uninhabited country—those that have barely reached manhood being the most truculent, insolent and reckless. A man meeting such a party runs great risk of losing his horse, his rifle and all else he has. This has happened quite frequently during the past few years to hunters or cowboys who have wandered into the debatable territory where our country borders on the Indian lands; and in at least one such instance, that took place three years ago, the unfortunate individual lost his life as well as his belongings. But a frontiersman of any experience can generally “stand off” a small number of such assailants, unless he loses his nerve or is taken by surprise.

My only adventure with Indians was of a very mild kind. It was in the course of a solitary trip to the north and east of our range, to what was then practically unknown country, although now containing many herds of cattle. One morning I had been traveling along the edge of the prairie, and about noon I rode Manitou up

a slight rise and came out on a plateau that was perhaps half a mile broad. When near the middle, four or five Indians suddenly came up over the edge, directly in front of me. The second they saw me they whipped their guns out of their slings, started their horses into a run, and came on at full tilt, whooping and brandishing their weapons. I instantly reined up and dismounted. The level plain where we were was of all places the one on which such an onslaught could best be met. In any broken country, or where there is much cover, a white man is at a great disadvantage if pitted against such adepts in the art of hiding as Indians; while, on the other hand, the latter will rarely rush in on a foe who, even if overpowered in the end, will probably inflict severe loss on his assailants. The fury of an Indian charge, and the whoops by which it is accompanied, often scare horses so as to stampe them; but in Manitou I had perfect trust, and the old fellow stood as steady as a rock, merely cocking his ears and looking round at the noise. I waited until the Indians were a hundred yards off, and then threw up my rifle and drew a bead on the foremost. The effect was like magic. The whole party scattered out as wild pigeons or teal ducks sometimes do when shot at, and doubled back on their tracks, the



Standing off Indians.





men bending over alongside their horses. When some distance off they halted and gathered together to consult, and after a minute one came forward alone, ostentatiously dropping his rifle and waving a blanket over his head. When he came within fifty yards I stopped him, and he pulled out a piece of paper—all Indians, when absent from their reservations, are supposed to carry passes—and called out, "How! Me good Indian!" I answered, "How," and assured him most sincerely I was very glad he *was* a good Indian, but I would not let him come closer, and when his companions began to draw near, I covered him with the rifle and made him move off, which he did with a sudden lapse into the most uncanonical Anglo-Saxon profanity. I then started to lead my horse out to the prairie; and after hovering round a short time they rode off, while I followed suit, but in the opposite direction. It had all passed too quickly for me to have time to get frightened; but during the rest of my ride I was exceedingly uneasy, and pushed tough, speedy old Manitou along at a rapid rate, keeping well out on the level. However, I never saw the Indians again. They may not have intended any mischief beyond giving me a fright, but I did not dare to let them come to close quarters, for they would probably have taken

my horse and rifle, and not impossibly my scalp as well. Towards nightfall I fell in with two old trappers who lived near Killdeer Mountains, and they informed me that my assailants were some young Sioux bucks, at whose hands they themselves had just suffered the loss of two horses.

A few cool, resolute whites, well armed, can generally beat back a much larger number of Indians if attacked in the open. One of the first cattle outfits that came to the Powder River country, at the very end of the last war with the Sioux and Cheyennes, had an experience of this sort. There were six or eight whites, including the foreman, who was part owner, and they had about a thousand head of cattle. These they intended to hold just out of the dangerous district until the end of the war, which was evidently close at hand. They would thus get first choice of the new grazing grounds. But they ventured a little too far, and one day while on the trail were suddenly charged by fifty or sixty Indians. The cattle were scattered in every direction, and many of them slain in wantonness, though most were subsequently recovered. All the loose horses were driven off. But the men themselves instantly ran together and formed a ring, fighting from behind the pack- and saddle-ponies.

One of their number was killed, as well as two or three of the animals composing their living breastwork; but being good riflemen, they drove off their foes. The latter did not charge them directly, but circled round, each rider concealed on the outside of his horse; and though their firing was very rapid, it was, naturally, very wild. The whites killed a good many ponies, and got one scalp, belonging to a young Sioux brave who dashed up too close, and whose body in consequence could not be carried off by his comrades, as happened to two or three others who were seen to fall. Both the men who related the incident to me had been especially struck by the skill and daring shown by the Indians in thus carrying off their dead and wounded the instant they fell.

The relations between the white borderers and their red-skinned foes and neighbors are rarely pleasant. There are incessant quarrels, and each side has to complain of bitter wrongs. Many of the frontiersmen are brutal, reckless and overbearing; most of the Indians are treacherous, revengeful and fiendishly cruel. Crime and bloodshed are the only possible results when such men are brought in contact. Writers usually pay heed only to one side of the story; they recite the crimes committed by one party, whether whites or Indians, and omit all reference to the

equally numerous sins of the other. In our dealings with the Indians we have erred quite as often through sentimentality as through willful wrong-doing. Out of my own short experience I could recite a dozen instances of white outrages which, if told alone, would seem to justify all the outcry raised on behalf of the Indian, and I could also tell of as many Indian atrocities which make one almost feel that not a single one of the race should be left alive.

The chief trouble arises from the feeling alluded to in this last sentence—the tendency on each side to hold the race, and not the individual, responsible for the deeds of the latter. The skirmish between the cowboys and the Cheyennes, spoken of above, offers a case in point. It was afterwards found out that two horse-thieves had stolen some ponies from the Cheyennes. The latter at once sallied out and attempted to take some from a cow camp, and a fight resulted. In exactly the same way I once knew a party of buffalo hunters, who had been robbed of their horses by the Sioux, to retaliate by stealing an equal number from some perfectly peaceful Grosventres. A white or an Indian who would not himself commit any outrage will yet make no effort to prevent his fellows from organizing expeditions against men of the rival race. This

is natural enough where law is weak, and where, in consequence, every man has as much as he can do to protect himself without meddling in the quarrels of his neighbors. Thus a white community will often refrain from taking active steps against men who steal horses only from the Indians, although I have known a number of instances where the ranchmen have themselves stopped such outrages. The Indians behave in the same way. There is a peaceful tribe not very far from us which harbors two or three red horse-thieves, who steal from the whites at every chance. Recently, in our country, an expedition was raised to go against these horse-thieves, and it was only with the utmost difficulty that it was stopped; had it actually gone, accompanied as it would have been by scoundrels bent on plunder, as well as by wronged men who thought all redskins pretty much alike, the inevitable result would have been a bloody fight with all the Indians, both good and bad.

Not only do Indians differ individually, but they differ as tribes. An upper-class Cherokee is nowadays as good as a white. The Nez Percés differ from the Apaches as much as a Scotch laird does from a Calabrian bandit. A Cheyenne warrior is one of the most redoubtable foes in the whole world; a "digger" Snake one of the



most despicable. The Pueblo is as thrifty, industrious and peaceful as any European peasant, and no Arab of the Soudan is a lazier, wilder robber than is the Arapahoe.

The frontiersmen themselves differ almost as widely from one another. But in the event of an Indian outbreak all suffer alike, and so all are obliged to stand together; when the reprisals for a deed of guilt are sure to fall on the innocent, the latter have no resource save to ally themselves with the guilty. Moreover, even the best Indians are very apt to have a good deal of the wild beast in them; when they scent blood they wish their share of it, no matter from whose veins it flows. I once had a German in my employ, who, when a young child, had lost all his relations by a fate so terrible that it had weighed down his whole after-life. His family was living out on the extreme border at the time of the great Sioux outbreak towards the end of the Civil War. There were many Indians around, seemingly on good terms with them; and to two of these Indians they had been able to be of much service, so that they became great friends. When the outbreak occurred, the members of this family were among the first captured. The two friendly Indians then endeavored to save their lives, doing all they could to dissuade their

comrades from committing violence. Finally, after an angry discussion, the chief, who was present, suddenly ended it by braining the mother. The two former friends, finding their efforts useless, forthwith turned round and joined with the others in putting the daughters to death with torture. The boy alone was allowed to live. If he had been a native-born frontiersman, instead of a peaceful, quiet German, he probably would have turned into an inveterate Indian-slayer, resolute to kill any of the hated race wherever and whenever met—a type far from unknown on the border, of which I have myself seen at least one example.

With this incident it is only fair to contrast another that I heard related while spending the night in a small cow ranch on the Beaver, whither I had ridden on one of our many tedious hunts after lost horses. Being tired, I got into my bunk early, and while lying there listened to the conversation of two cowboys—both strangers to me—who had also ridden up to the ranch to spend the night. They were speaking of Indians, and mentioned, certainly without any marked disapprobation, a jury that had just acquitted a noted horse-thief of the charge of stealing stock from some Piegans, though he himself had openly admitted its truth. One, an unpre-

possessing, beetle-browed man, suddenly remarked that he had once met an Indian who was a pretty good fellow, and he proceeded to tell the story. A small party of Indians had passed the winter near the ranch at which he was employed. The chief had two particularly fine horses, which so excited the cowboy's cupidity that one night he drove them off and "cached"—that is, hid—them in a safe place. The chief looked for them high and low, but without success. Soon afterwards one of the cowboy's own horses strayed. When spring came the Indians went away; but three days afterwards the chief returned, bringing with him the strayed horse, which he had happened to run across. "I couldn't stand that," said the narrator, "so I just told him I reckoned I knew where his own lost horses were, and I saddled up my bronch' and piloted him to them."

Indians are excellent fighters, though they do not shoot well—being in this respect much inferior not only to the old hunters, but also, nowadays, to the regular soldiers, who during the past three or four years have improved wonderfully in marksmanship. They have a very effective discipline of their own, and thus a body of them may readily be an overmatch for an equal number of frontiersmen if the latter have no leader

whom they respect. If the cowboys have rifles—for the revolver is useless in long-range individual fighting—they feel no fear of the Indians, so long as there are but half a dozen or so on a side; but, though infinitely quicker in their movements than regular cavalry, yet, owing to their heavy saddles, they are not able to make quite so wonderful marches as the Indians do, and their unruly spirit often renders them ineffective when gathered in any number without a competent captain. Under a man like Forrest they would become the most formidable fighting horsemen in the world.

In the summer of 1886, at the time of the war-scare over the "Cutting incident," we began the organization of a troop of cavalry in our district, notifying the Secretary of War that we were at the service of the Government, and being promised every assistance by our excellent chief executive of the Territory, Governor Pierce. Of course the cowboys were all eager for war, they did not much care with whom; they were very patriotic, they were fond of adventure, and, to tell the truth, they were by no means averse to the prospect of plunder. News from the outside world came to us very irregularly, and often in distorted form, so that we began to think we might get involved in a conflict not only with

Mexico, but with England also. One evening at my ranch the men began talking over the English soldiers, so I got down "Napier" and read them several extracts from his descriptions of the fighting in the Spanish peninsula, also recounting as well as I could the great deeds of the British cavalry from Waterloo to Balaklava, and finishing up by describing from memory the fine appearance, the magnificent equipment and the superb horses of the Household cavalry and of a regiment of hussars I had once seen.

All of this produced much the same effect on my listeners that the sight of Marmion's cavalcade produced in the minds of the Scotch moss-troopers on the eve of Flodden; and at the end, one of them, who had been looking into the fire and rubbing his hands together, said with regretful emphasis, "Oh, how I *would* like to kill one of them!"

## SHERIFF'S WORK ON A RANCH





## SHERIFF'S WORK ON A RANCH

### I. FINNIGAN.

**I**N our own immediate locality we have had more difficulty with white desperadoes than with the redskins. At times there has been a good deal of cattle-killing and horse-stealing, and occasionally a murder or two. But as regards the last, a man has very little more to fear in the West than in the East, in spite of all the lawless acts one reads about. Undoubtedly a long-standing quarrel sometimes ends in a shooting-match; and of course savage affrays occasionally take place in the bar-rooms; in which, be it remarked, that, inasmuch as the men are generally drunk, and, furthermore, as the revolver is at best a rather inaccurate weapon, outsiders are nearly as apt to get hurt as are the participants. But if a man minds his own business and does not go into bar-rooms, gambling saloons, and the like, he need have no fear of being molested; while a revolver is a mere foolish incumbrance for any but a thorough expert, and need never be carried. Against horse-thieves,

cattle-thieves, claim-jumpers, and the like, however, every ranchman has to be on his guard, and armed collisions with these gentry are sometimes inevitable. The fact of such scoundrels being able to ply their trade with impunity for any length of time can only be understood if the absolute wildness of our land is taken into account. The country is yet unsurveyed and unmapped; the course of the river itself, as put down on the various Government and railroad maps, is very much a mere piece of guesswork, its bed being in many parts—as by my ranch—ten or fifteen miles or more away from where these maps make it. White hunters came into the land by 1880, but the actual settlement only began in 1882, when the first cattle-men drove in their herds, all of Northern stock, the Texans not passing north of the country around the head-waters of the river until the following year, while until 1885 the territory through which it ran for the final hundred and fifty miles before entering the Big Missouri remained as little known as ever.

Some of us had always been anxious to run down the river in a boat during the time of the spring floods, as we thought we might get good duck and goose shooting, and also kill some beaver, while the trip would, in addition, have all

the charm of an exploring expedition. Twice, so far as we knew, the feat had been performed, both times by hunters, and in one instance with very good luck in shooting and trapping. A third attempt, by two men on a raft, made the spring preceding that on which we made ours, had been less successful, for, when a score or so of miles below our ranch, a bear killed one of the two adventurers, and the survivor returned.

We could only go down during a freshet, for the Little Missouri, like most plains' rivers, is usually either a dwindling streamlet, a mere slender thread of sluggish water, or else a boiling, muddy torrent, running over a bed of shifting quicksand, that neither man nor beast can cross. It rises and falls with extraordinary suddenness and intensity, an instance of which has just occurred as this very page is being written. Last evening, when the moon rose, from the ranch veranda we could see the river-bed almost dry, the stream having shrunk under the drought till it was little but a string of shallow pools, with between them a trickle of water that was not ankle deep, and hardly wet the fetlocks of the saddle-band when driven across it; yet at day-break this morning, without any rain having fallen near us, but doubtless in consequence of

some heavy cloudburst near its head, the swift, swollen current was foaming brim high between the banks, and even the fords were swimming-deep for the horses.

Accordingly we had planned to run down the river sometime towards the end of April, taking advantage of a rise; but an accident made us start three or four weeks sooner than we had intended.

In 1886 the ice went out of the upper river very early, during the first part of February; but it at times almost froze over again, the bottom ice did not break up, and a huge gorge, scores of miles in length, formed in and above the bend known as the Ox-bow, a long distance up-stream from my ranch. About the middle of March this great Ox-bow jam came down past us. It moved slowly, its front forming a high, crumbling wall, and creaming over like an immense breaker on the seashore; we could hear the dull roaring and crunching as it plowed down the river-bed long before it came in sight round the bend above us. The ice kept piling and tossing up in the middle, and not only heaped itself above the level of the banks, but also in many places spread out on each side beyond them, grinding against the cottonwood trees in front of the ranch veranda, and at one moment bidding

fair to overwhelm the house itself. It did not, however, but moved slowly down past us with that look of vast, resistless, relentless force that any great body of moving ice, as a glacier, or an iceberg, always conveys to the beholder. The heaviest pressure from the water that was backed up behind being, of course, always in the middle, this part kept breaking away, and finally was pushed on clear through, leaving the river so changed that it could hardly be known. On each bank, and for a couple of hundred feet out from it into the stream, was a solid mass of ice, edging the river along most of its length, at least as far as its course lay through lands that we knew; and in the narrow channel between the sheer-ice-walls the water ran like a mill-race.

At night the snowy, glittering masses, tossed up and heaped into fantastic forms, shone like crystal in the moonlight; but they soon lost their beauty, becoming fouled and blackened, and at the same time melted and settled down until it was possible to clamber out across the slippery hummocks.

We had brought out a clinker-built boat especially to ferry ourselves over the river when it was high, and were keeping our ponies on the opposite side, where there was a good range shut in by some very broken country that we knew

they would not be apt to cross. This boat had already proved very useful and now came in handier than ever, as without it we could take no care of our horses. We kept it on the bank, tied to a tree, and every day would carry it or slide it across the hither ice bank, usually with not a little tumbling and scrambling on our part, lower it gently into the swift current, pole it across to the ice on the farther bank, and then drag it over that, repeating the operation when we came back. One day we crossed and walked off about ten miles to a tract of wild and rugged country, cleft in every direction by ravines and cedar cañons, in the deepest of which we had left four deer hanging a fortnight before, as game thus hung up in cold weather keeps indefinitely. The walking was very bad, especially over the clay buttes; for the sun at midday had enough strength to thaw out the soil to the depth of a few inches only, and accordingly the steep hillsides were covered by a crust of slippery mud, with the frozen ground underneath. It was hard to keep one's footing, and to avoid falling while balancing along the knife-like ridge crests, or while clinging to the stunted sage brush as we went down into the valleys. The deer had been hung in a thicket of dwarfed cedars; but when we reached the place we found nothing save



scattered pieces of their carcasses, and the soft mud was tramped all over with round, deeply marked footprints, some of them but a few hours old, showing that the plunderers of our cache were a pair of cougars—"mountain lions," as they are called by the Westerners. They had evidently been at work for some time, and had eaten almost every scrap of flesh; one of the deer had been carried for some distance to the other side of a deep, narrow, chasm-like gully across which the cougar must have leaped with the carcass in its mouth. We followed the fresh trail of the cougars for some time, as it was well marked, especially in the snow still remaining in the bottoms of the deeper ravines; finally it led into a tangle of rocky hills riven by dark cedar-clad gorges, in which we lost it, and we retraced our steps, intending to return on the morrow with a good track hound.

But we never carried out our intentions, for next morning one of my men who was out before breakfast came back to the house with the startling news that our boat was gone—stolen, for he brought with him the end of the rope with which it had been tied, evidently cut off with a sharp knife; and also a red woolen mitten with a leather palm, which he had picked up on the ice. We had no doubt as to who had stolen it,



for whoever had done so had certainly gone down the river in it, and the only other thing in the shape of a boat on the Little Missouri was a small flat-bottomed scow in the possession of three hard characters who lived in a shack, or hut, some twenty miles above us, and whom we had shrewdly suspected for some time of wishing to get out of the country, as certain of the cattlemen had begun openly to threaten to lynch them. They belonged to a class that always holds sway during the raw youth of a frontier community, and the putting down of which is the first step towards decent government. Dakota, west of the Missouri, has been settled very recently, and every town within it has seen strange antics performed during the past six or seven years. Medora, in particular, has had more than its full share of shooting and stabbing affrays, horse-stealing and cattle-killing. But the time for such things was passing away; and during the preceding fall the vigilantes—locally known as “stranglers,” in happy allusion to their summary method of doing justice—had made a clean sweep of the cattle country along the Yellowstone and that part of the Big Missouri around and below its mouth. Be it remarked, in passing, that while the outcome of their efforts had been in the main wholesome, yet, as is always

the case in an extended raid of vigilantes, several of the sixty odd victims had been perfectly innocent men who had been hung or shot in company with the real scoundrels, either through carelessness and misapprehension or on account of some personal spite.

The three men we suspected had long been accused—justly or unjustly—of being implicated both in cattle-killing and in that worst of frontier crimes, horse-stealing; it was only by an accident that they had escaped the clutches of the vigilantes the preceding fall. Their leader was a well-built fellow named Finnigan, who had long red hair reaching to his shoulders, and always wore a broad hat and a fringed buckskin shirt. He was rather a hard case, and had been chief actor in a number of shooting scrapes. The other two were a half-breed, a stout, muscular man, and an old German, whose viciousness was of the weak and shiftless type.

We knew that these three men were becoming uneasy and were anxious to leave the locality; and we also knew that traveling on horseback, in the direction in which they would wish to go, was almost impossible, as the swollen, ice-fringed rivers could not be crossed at all, and the stretches of broken ground would form nearly an impassable barrier. So we had little doubt

that it was they who had taken our boat; and as they knew there was then no boat left on the river, and as the country along its banks was entirely impracticable for horses, we felt sure they would be confident that there could be no pursuit.

Accordingly we at once set to work in our turn to build a flat-bottomed scow, wherein to follow them. Our loss was very annoying, and might prove a serious one if we were long prevented from crossing over to look after the saddle-band; but the determining motive in our minds was neither chagrin nor anxiety to recover our property. In any wild country where the power of the law is little felt or heeded, and where every one has to rely upon himself for protection, men soon get to feel that it is in the highest degree unwise to submit to any wrong without making an immediate and resolute effort to avenge it upon the wrong-doers, at no matter what cost of risk or trouble. To submit tamely and meekly to theft, or to any other injury, is to invite almost certain repetition of the offense, in a place where self-reliant hardihood and the ability to hold one's own under all circumstances rank as the first virtues.

Two of my cowboys, Seawall and Dow, were

originally from Maine, and were mighty men of their hands, skilled in woodcraft and the use of the ax, paddle and rifle. They set to work with a will, and, as by good luck there were plenty of boards, in two or three days they had turned out a first-class flat-bottom, which was roomy, drew very little water, and was dry as a bone; and though, of course, not a handy craft, was easily enough managed in going down-stream. Into this we packed flour, coffee and bacon enough to last us a fortnight or so, plenty of warm bedding and the mess kit; and early one cold March morning slid it into the icy current, took our seats, and shoved off down the river.

There could have been no better men for a trip of this kind than my two companions, Seawall and Dow. They were tough, hardy, resolute fellows, quick as cats, strong as bears, and able to travel like bull moose. We felt very little uneasiness as to the result of a fight with the men we were after, provided we had anything like a fair show; moreover, we intended, if possible, to get them at such a disadvantage that there would not be any fight at all. The only risk of any consequence that we ran was that of being ambushed; for the extraordinary formation of the Bad Lands, with the ground cut up into gullies,

serried walls, and battlemented hill-tops, makes it the country of all others for hiding-places and ambuscades.

For several days before we started the weather had been bitterly cold, as a furious blizzard was blowing; but on the day we left there was a lull, and we hoped a thaw had set in. We all were most warmly and thickly dressed, with woolen socks and underclothes, heavy jackets and trousers, and great fur coats, so that we felt we could bid defiance to the weather. Each carried his rifle, and we had in addition a double-barreled duck gun, for water-fowl and beaver. To manage the boat, we had paddles, heavy oars, and long iron-shod poles, Seawall steering while Dow sat in the bow. Altogether we felt as if we were off on a holiday trip, and set to work to have as good a time as possible.

The river twisted in every direction, winding to and fro across the alluvial valley bottom, only to be brought up by the rows of great barren buttes that abounded it on each edge. It had worn away the sides of these till they towered up as cliffs of clay, marl, or sandstone. Across their white faces the seams of coal drew sharp black bands, and they were elsewhere blotched and varied with brown, yellow, purple and red. This fantastic coloring, together with the jagged

irregularity of their crests, channeled by the weather into spires, buttresses and battlements, as well as their barrenness and the distinctness with which they loomed up through the high, dry air, gave them a look that was a singular mixture of the terrible and the grotesque. The bottoms were covered thickly with leafless cottonwood trees, or else with withered brown grass and stunted, sprawling sage bushes. At times the cliffs rose close to us on either hand, and again the valley would widen into a sinuous oval a mile or two long, bounded on every side, as far as our eyes could see, by a bluff line without a break, until, as we floated down close to its other end, there would suddenly appear in one corner a cleft through which the stream rushed out. As it grew dusk the shadowy outlines of the buttes lost nothing of their weirdness; the twilight only made their uncouth shapelessness more grim and forbidding. They looked like the crouching figures of great goblin beasts.

Those two hills on the right  
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight—  
 While to the left a tall scalped mountain. . . .  
 The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:  
 The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay  
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay—



might well have been written after seeing the strange, desolate lands lying in western Dakota.

All through the early part of the day we drifted swiftly down between the heaped-up piles of ice, the cakes and slabs now dirty and unattractive looking. Towards evening, however, there came long reaches where the banks on either side were bare, though even here there would every now and then be necks where the jam had been crowded into too narrow a spot and had risen over the side as it had done up-stream, grinding the bark from the big cottonwoods and snapping the smaller ones short off. In such places the ice-walls were sometimes eight or ten feet high, continually undermined by the restless current; and every now and then overhanging pieces would break off and slide into the stream with a loud sullen splash, like the plunge of some great water beast. Nor did we dare to go in too close to the high cliffs, as bowlders and earth masses, freed by the thaw from the grip of the frost, kept rolling and leaping down their faces and forced us to keep a sharp lookout lest our boat should be swamped.

At nightfall we landed and made our camp on a point of wood-covered land jutting out into the stream. We had seen very little trace of life until late in the day, for the ducks had not yet



arrived; but in the afternoon a sharp-tailed prairie fowl flew across stream ahead of the boat, lighting on a low branch by the water's edge. Shooting him, we landed and picked off two others that were perched high up in leafless cottonwoods, plucking the buds. These three birds served us as supper; and shortly afterward, as the cold grew more and more biting, we rolled in under our furs and blankets and were soon asleep.

In the morning it was evident that instead of thawing it had grown decidedly colder. The anchor ice was running thick in the river, and we spent the first hour or two after sunrise in hunting over the frozen swamp bottom for white-tail deer, of which there were many tracks; but we saw nothing. Then we broke camp and again started down-stream—a simple operation, as we had no tent, and all we had to do was to cord up our bedding and gather the mess kit. It was colder than before, and for some time we went along in chilly silence, nor was it until midday that the sun warmed our blood in the least. The crooked bed of the current twisted hither and thither, but whichever way it went the icy north wind, blowing stronger all the time, drew steadily up it. One of us remarking that we bade fair to have it in our faces all day, the steersman an-

nounced that we could n't, unless it was the crookedest wind in Dakota; and half an hour afterward we overheard him muttering to himself that it *was* the crookedest wind in Dakota. We passed a group of tepees on one bottom, marking the deserted winter camp of some Grosventre Indians, which some of my men had visited a few months previously on a trading expedition. It was almost the last point on the river with which we were acquainted. At midday we landed on a sand-bar for lunch—a simple enough meal, the tea being boiled over a fire of driftwood, that also fried the bacon, while the bread only needed to be baked every other day. Then we again shoved off. As the afternoon waned the cold grew still more bitter, and the wind increased, blowing in fitful gusts against us, until it chilled us to the marrow when we sat still. But we rarely did sit still, for even the rapid current was unable to urge the light-draught scow down in the teeth of the strong blasts, and we only got her along by dint of hard work with pole and paddle. Long before the sun went down the ice had begun to freeze on the handles of the poles, and we were not sorry to haul on shore for the night. For supper we again had prairie fowl, having shot four from a great patch of bulberry bushes late in the after-

noon. A man doing hard open-air work in cold weather is always hungry for meat.

During the night the thermometer went down to zero, and in the morning the anchor ice was running so thickly that we did not care to start at once, for it is most difficult to handle a boat in the deep frozen slush. Accordingly we took a couple of hours for a deer hunt, as there were evidently many white-tail on the bottom. We selected one long, isolated patch of tangled trees and brushwood, two of us beating through it while the other watched one end; but almost before we had begun four deer broke out at one side, loped easily off, evidently not much scared, and took refuge in a deep glen or gorge, densely wooded with cedars, that made a blind pocket in the steep side of one of the great plateaus bounding the bottom. After a short consultation, one of our number crept round to the head of the gorge, making a wide *détour*, and the other two advanced up it on each side, thus completely surrounding the doomed deer. They attempted to break out past the man at the head of the glen, who shot down a couple, a buck and a yearling doe. The other two made their escape by running off over ground so rough that it looked fitter to be crossed by their upland-loving cousins, the black-tail.

This success gladdened our souls, insuring us plenty of fresh meat. We carried pretty much all of both deer back to camp, and, after a hearty breakfast, loaded our scow and started merrily off once more. The cold still continued intense, and as the day wore away we became numbed by it, until at last an incident occurred that set our blood running freely again.

## II. THE CAMP OF THE THIEVES.

We were, of course, always on the alert, keeping a sharp lookout ahead and around us, and making as little noise as possible. Finally our watchfulness was rewarded, for in the middle of the afternoon of this, the third day we had been gone, as we came around a bend, we saw in front of us the lost boat, together with a scow, moored against the bank, while from among the bushes some little way back the smoke of a camp-fire curled up through the frosty air. We had come on the camp of the thieves. As I glanced at the faces of my two followers I was struck by the grim, eager look in their eyes. Our overcoats were off in a second, and after exchanging a few muttered words, the boat was hastily and silently shoved towards the bank. As soon as it touched

the shore ice I leaped out and ran up behind a clump of bushes, so as to cover the landing of the others, who had to make the boat fast. For a moment we felt a thrill of keen excitement, and our veins tingled as we crept cautiously towards the fire, for it seemed likely that there would be a brush; but, as it turned out, this was almost the only moment of much interest, for the capture itself was as tame as possible.

The men we were after knew they had taken with them the only craft there was on the river, and so felt perfectly secure; accordingly, we took them absolutely by surprise. The only one in camp was the German, whose weapons were on the ground, and who, of course, gave up at once, his two companions being off hunting. We made him safe, delegating one of our number to look after him particularly and see that he made no noise, and then sat down and waited for the others. The camp was under the lee of a cut bank, behind which we crouched, and, after waiting an hour or over, the men we were after came in. We heard them a long way off and made ready, watching them for some minutes as they walked towards us, their rifles on their shoulders and the sunlight glinting on the steel barrels. When they were within twenty yards or

so we straightened up from behind the bank, covering them with our cocked rifles, while I shouted to them to hold up their hands—an order that in such a case, in the West, a man is not apt to disregard if he thinks the giver is in earnest. The half-breed obeyed at once, his knees trembling as if they had been made of whalebone. Finnigan hesitated for a second, his eyes fairly wolfish; then, as I walked up within a few paces, covering the center of his chest so as to avoid overshooting, and repeating the command, he saw that he had no show, and, with an oath, let his rifle drop and held his hands up beside his head.

It was nearly dusk, so we camped where we were. The first thing to be done was to collect enough wood to enable us to keep a blazing fire all night long. While Seawall and Dow, thoroughly at home in the use of the axe, chopped down dead cottonwood trees and dragged the logs up into a huge pile, I kept guard over the three prisoners, who were huddled into a sullen group some twenty yards off, just the right distance for the buckshot in the double-barrel. Having captured our men, we were in a quandary how to keep them. The cold was so intense that to tie them tightly hand and foot meant, in all likelihood, freezing both hands and feet off during the night; and it was no use ty-



"We made the men take off their boots."







ing them at all unless we tied them tightly enough to stop in part the circulation. So nothing was left for us to do but to keep perpetual guard over them. Of course we had carefully searched them and taken away not only their firearms and knives, but everything else that could possibly be used as a weapon. By this time they were pretty well cowed, as they found out very quickly that they would be well treated so long as they remained quiet, but would receive some rough handling if they attempted any disturbance.

Our next step was to cord their weapons up in some bedding, which we sat on while we took supper. Immediately afterward we made the men take off their boots—an additional safeguard, as it was a cactus country, in which a man could travel barefoot only at the risk of almost certainly laming himself for life—and go to bed, all three lying on one buffalo robe and being covered by another, in the full light of the blazing fire. We determined to watch in succession a half-night apiece, thus each getting a full rest every third night. I took first watch, my two companions, revolver under head, rolling up in their blankets on the side of the fire opposite that on which the three captives lay; while I, in fur cap, gauntlets and overcoat, took my station

a little way back in the circle of firelight, in a position in which I could watch my men with the absolute certainty of being able to stop any movement, no matter how sudden. For this night-watching we always used the double-barrel with buckshot, as a rifle is uncertain in the dark; while with a shot-gun at such a distance, and with men lying down, a person who is watchful may be sure that they cannot get up, no matter how quick they are, without being riddled. The only danger lies in the extreme monotony of sitting still in the dark guarding men who make no motion, and the consequent tendency to go to sleep, especially when one has had a hard day's work and is feeling really tired. But neither on the first night nor on any subsequent one did we ever abate a jot of our watchfulness.

Next morning we started downstream, having a well-laden flotilla, for the men we had caught had a good deal of plunder in their boats, including some saddles, as they evidently intended to get horses as soon as they reached a part of the country where there were any and where it was possible to travel. Finnigan, who was the ringleader and the man I was especially after, I kept by my side in our boat, the other two being put in their own scow, heavily laden and rather leaky and with only one paddle. We kept them

just in front of us, a few yards distant, the river being so broad that we knew, and they knew also, any attempt at escape to be perfectly hopeless.

For some miles we went swiftly downstream, the cold being bitter and the slushy anchor ice choking the space between the boats; then the current grew sluggish, eddies forming along the sides. We paddled on until, coming into a long reach where the water was almost backed up, we saw there was a stoppage at the other end. Working up to this, it proved to be a small ice jam, through which we broke our way only to find ourselves, after a few hundred yards, stopped by another. We had hoped that the first was merely a jam of anchor ice, caused by the cold of the last few days; but the jam we had now come to was black and solid and, running the boats ashore, one of us went off down the bank to find out what the matter was. On climbing a hill that commanded a view of the valley for several miles, the explanation became only too evident—as far as we could see, the river was choked with black ice. The great Ox-bow jam had stopped, and we had come down to its tail.

We had nothing to do but to pitch camp, after which we held a consultation. The Little Missouri has much too swift a current—when it has

any current at all—with too bad a bottom, for it to be possible to take a boat upstream; and to walk meant, of course, abandoning almost all we had. Moreover, we knew that a thaw would very soon start the jam, and so made up our minds that we had best simply stay where we were and work downstream as fast as we could, trusting that the spell of bitter weather would pass before our food gave out.

### III. EIGHT DAYS OF WATCHING.

The next eight days were as irksome and monotonous as any I ever spent: there is very little amusement in combining the functions of a sheriff with those of an arctic explorer. The weather kept as cold as ever. During the night the water in the pail would freeze solid. Ice formed all over the river, thickly along the banks; and the clear, frosty sun gave us so little warmth that the melting hardly began before noon. Each day the great jam would settle downstream a few miles, only to wedge again, leaving behind it several smaller jams, through which we would work our way until we were as close to the tail of the large one as we dared to go. Once we came round a bend and got so near that we were in a good deal of danger of

being sucked under. The current ran too fast to let us work back against it, and we could not pull the boat up over the steep banks of rotten ice, which were breaking off and falling in all the time. We could only land and snub the boats up with ropes, holding them there for two or three hours until the jam worked down once more—all the time, of course, having to keep guard over the captives, who had caused us so much trouble that we were bound to bring them in, no matter what else we lost.

We had to be additionally cautious on account of being in the Indian country, having worked down past Kildeer Mountains, where some of my cowboys had run across a band of Sioux—said to be Tetons—the year before. Very probably the Indians would not have harmed us anyhow, but as we were hampered by the prisoners we preferred not meeting them; nor did we, though we saw plenty of fresh signs and found, to our sorrow, that they had just made a grand hunt all down the river and had killed or driven off almost every head of game in the country through which we were passing.

As our stock of provisions grew scantier and scantier, we tried in vain to eke it out by the chase; for we saw no game. Two of us would go out hunting at a time, while the third kept

guard over the prisoners. The latter would be made to sit down together on a blanket at one side of the fire, while the guard for the time being stood or sat some fifteen or twenty yards off. The prisoners being unarmed and kept close together, there was no possibility of their escaping, and the guard kept at such a distance that they could not overpower him by springing on him, he having a Winchester or the double-barreled shot-gun always in his hands cocked and at the ready. So long as we kept wide-awake and watchful there was not the least danger, as our three men knew us and understood perfectly that the slightest attempt at a break would result in their being shot down; but, although there was thus no risk, it was harassing, tedious work, and the strain, day in and day out, without any rest or let up, became very tiresome.

The days were monotonous to a degree. The endless rows of hills bounding the valley, barren and naked, stretched along without a break. When we rounded a bend, it was only to see on each hand the same lines of broken buttes dwindling off into the distance ahead of us as they had dwindled off into the distance behind. If, in hunting, we climbed to their tops, as far as our eyes could scan there was nothing but the great rolling prairie, bleak and lifeless, reach-



ing off to the horizon. We broke camp in the morning, on a point of land covered with brown, leafless, frozen cottonwoods; and in the afternoon we pitched camp on another point in the midst of a grove of the same stiff, dreary trees. The discolored river, whose eddies boiled into yellow foam, flowed always between the same banks of frozen mud or of muddy ice. And what was, from a practical standpoint, even worse, our diet began to be as same as the scenery. Being able to kill nothing, we exhausted all our stock of provisions, and got reduced to flour, without yeast or baking-powder; and unleavened bread, made with exceedingly muddy water, is not, as a steady thing, attractive.

Finding that they were well treated and were also watched with the closest vigilance, our prisoners behaved themselves excellently and gave no trouble, though afterward, when out of our hands and shut up in jail, the half-breed got into a stabbing affray. They conversed freely with my two men on a number of indifferent subjects, and after the first evening no allusion was made to the theft or anything connected with it; so that an outsider overhearing the conversation would never have guessed what our relations to each other really were. Once, and once only, did Finnigan broach the subject. Somebody had

been speaking of a man whom we all knew, called "Calamity," who had been recently taken by the sheriff on a charge of horse-stealing. Calamity had escaped once, but was caught at a disadvantage the next time; nevertheless, when summoned to hold his hands up, he refused and attempted to draw his own revolver, with the result of having two bullets put through him. Finnigan commented on Calamity as a fool for "not knowing when a man had the drop on him"; and then, suddenly turning to me, said, his weather-beaten face flushing darkly: "If I'd had any show at all, you'd have sure had to fight, Mr. Roosevelt; but there wasn't any use making a break when I'd only have got shot myself, with no chance of harming any one else." I laughed and nodded, and the subject was dropped.

Indeed, if the time was tedious to us, it must have seemed never-ending to our prisoners, who had nothing to do but to lie still and read, or chew the bitter cud of their reflections, always conscious that some pair of eyes was watching them every moment, and that at least one loaded rifle was ever ready to be used against them. They had quite a stock of books, some of a rather unexpected kind. Dime novels and the inevitable "History of the James Brothers"—a book that, together with the "Police Gazette," is

to be found in the hands of every professed or putative ruffian in the West—seemed perfectly in place; but it was somewhat surprising to find that a large number of more or less drearly silly “society” novels, ranging from Ouida’s to those of The Duchess and Augusta J. Evans, were most greedily devoured. As for me, I had brought with me “Anna Karénina,” and my surroundings were quite gray enough to harmonize well with Tolstoï.

Our commons grew shorter and shorter; and finally even the flour was nearly gone, and we were again forced to think seriously of abandoning the boats. The Indians had driven all the deer out of the country; occasionally we shot prairie fowl, but they were not plentiful. A flock of geese passed us one morning, and afterward an old gander settled down on the river near our camp; but he was over two hundred yards off, and a rifle-shot missed him. Where he settled down, by the way, the river was covered with thick glare ice that would just bear his weight; and it was curious to see him stretch his legs out in front and slide forty or fifty feet when he struck, balancing himself with his outspread wings.

But when the day was darkest the dawn appeared. At last, having worked down some

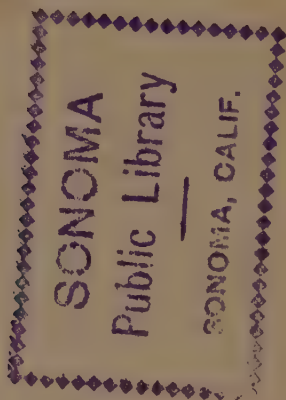
thirty miles at the tail of the ice jam, we struck an outlying cow-camp of the C Diamond (C ♦) ranch, and knew that our troubles were almost over. There was but one cowboy in it, but we were certain of his cordial help, for in a stock country all make common cause against either horse-thieves or cattle-thieves. He had no wagon, but told us we could get one up at a ranch near Killdeer Mountains, some fifteen miles off, and lent me a pony to go up there and see about it—which I accordingly did, after a sharp preliminary tussle when I came to mount the wiry bronco (one of my men remarking in a loud aside to our cowboy host, “the boss ain’t no bronco-buster”). When I reached the solitary ranch spoken of, I was able to hire a large prairie schooner and two tough little bronco mares, driven by the settler himself, a rugged old plainsman, who evidently could hardly understand why I took so much bother with the thieves instead of hanging them off-hand. Returning to the river the next day, we walked our men up to the Killdeer Mountains. Seawall and Dow left me the following morning, went back to the boats and had no further difficulty, for the weather set in very warm, the ice went through with a rush, and they reached Mandan in about ten days, killing four beaver and five geese on the way, but

lacking time to stop to do any regular hunting.

Meanwhile I took the three thieves into Dickinson, the nearest town. The going was bad and the little mares could only drag the wagon at a walk; so, though we drove during the daylight, it took us two days and a night to make the journey. It was a most desolate drive. The prairie had been burned the fall before and was a mere bleak waste of blackened earth, and a cold, rainy mist lasted throughout the two days. The only variety was where the road crossed the shallow headwaters of Knife and Green rivers. Here the ice was high along the banks and the wagon had to be taken to pieces to get it over. My three captives were unarmed, but as I was alone with them, except for the driver, of whom I knew nothing, I had to be doubly on my guard and never let them come close to me. The little mares went so slowly, and the heavy road rendered any hope of escape by flogging up the horses so entirely out of the question, that I soon found the safest plan was to put the prisoners in the wagon and myself walk behind with the inevitable Winchester. Accordingly I trudged steadily the whole time behind the wagon through the ankle-deep mud. It was a gloomy walk. Hour after hour went by always the same, while I plodded along through the dreary

landscape—hunger, cold and fatigue struggling with a sense of dogged, weary resolution. At night, when we put up at the squalid hut of a frontier granger, the only habitation on our road, it was even worse. I did not dare to go to sleep, but making my three men get into the upper bunk, from which they could get out only with difficulty, I sat up with my back against the cabin-door and kept watch over them all night long. So, after thirty-six hours' sleeplessness, I was most heartily glad when we at last jolted into the long, straggling main street of Dickinson, and I was able to give my unwilling companions into the hands of the sheriff.

Under the laws of Dakota I received my fees as a deputy sheriff for making the three arrests, and also mileage for the three hundred odd miles gone over—a total of some fifty dollars.





Adios.















